Inside: 8-page Supplement } **DOWN YOUR GARDEN with RICHARD DIMBLEBY**

Week ending January 31 1953 Every Wednesday Fourpence

JOHN BULL

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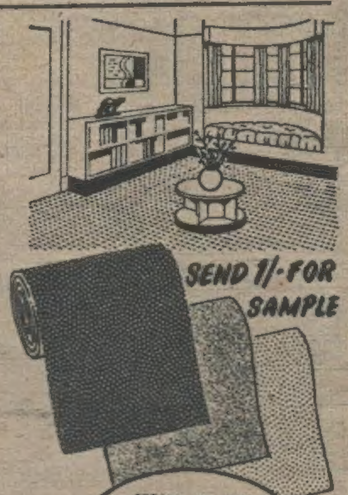

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EDITORIAL

Five miles up

As Queen Elizabeth is being crowned at Westminster on June 2, eight Englishmen and two New Zealanders will be high on Mount Everest.

If this British expedition to conquer the world's highest mountain manages to plant a Union Jack on the peak, more than 29,000 feet above sea-level, it will be a fitting symbol of the youth and vigour of our country.

"We hope to show that the tradition of quest and exploration is still very much alive in this generation," says the leader of the expedition, Colonel John Hunt, a forty-two year old mountaineer.

FOUR times before British parties have started the long climb. Four times they have been driven back by winds over a hundred miles an hour, cold down to forty degrees below, and the rarefied atmosphere.

COLONEL HUNT
The tradition lives on

In 1924, two members, Leigh Mallory and Irvine, were seen still climbing at over 28,000 feet. How high they reached will never be known, for they never returned.

Last year, a Swiss team managed to stagger to within two hundred feet of the prize, only to be frustrated by lack of oxygen.

"It would take a miracle to reach the summit," said one of the climbers. "Everest itself is not a difficult climbing proposition. But there is the physiological barrier of oxygen shortage, beyond which only a superman could climb."

To overcome this barrier, a twenty-eight year old scientist, Mr. Tom Bourdillon, who accompanied the last two British expeditions, is working on a new type of oxygen equipment.

It may utilize the carbon dioxide exhaled by the climbers, recovering oxygen from it so that it can be used again. If this works, airmen as well as mountaineers will benefit.

SPECIALLY light boots are to be tried out this year, for beyond 23,000 feet the lessening of the weight of footwear by one pound is equivalent to reducing weight on the shoulders by five pounds.

Should the British climbers fail, a French attempt is planned for next year. And 160 climbers are reported to be training in the Soviet Union for a mass attempt.

The Swiss have promised our expedition all help. It will be strong in men and materials. Science is playing its part. If luck and the weather are on its side, as well, we may have another British achievement to cheer about, in this Coronation year.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

SPRING is already in the air for the motorist. For, next week, the famous prewar brands of petrol are on sale again after thirteen years of "pool." And, with promises of smoother running, less wear and tear, more miles and more zip per gallon, the Austin Seven owner on the cover sets out with new confidence. Artist Andrew Johnson, who is sixty-three, owns an ancient Buick. A friend says that it runs more on miracles than on petrol.

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JANUARY 31, 1953 VOL. 93 NO. 2431 PHONE: TEMPLE BAR 2468 GRAMS: HEROICALLY, WESTCENT, LONDON

FREE SPEECH

Marriage without thought

AS a welfare officer I am frequently appalled at the casualness with which some people treat the most important things in life. A man came to seek my advice. Only two months previously he had married a widow with four young children. His wife, he complained, would not let him go to work. She handed over to him the responsibility of the house and the care of the children, while she went back to the job which she had enjoyed doing before her marriage.

I discovered that the man had known his wife for only six weeks before they married. Not once had they discussed the way they intended to live when they became man and wife.—K. D., Shropshire.

Soiled Goods

THE greengrocery trade has been neglected in the clean food campaign. Surely fruit and vegetables could be washed before being offered for sale. A stick of celery which I bought showered dirt all over the contents of my shopping bag, besides soiling the assistant's hands and mine.—MRS. A. THOMPSON, Ermington Crescent, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham.

In Spirit Only

IN the marriage service a bridegroom vows that he will endow his bride with all his worldly goods. This being so, how can a husband make a will bequeathing only a portion of his estate to his wife? She should be entitled to everything. A widow's future is often at the mercy of some caprice of her late husband.—T. W., Manchester.

Vows are not legally binding in this world. A widow sometimes has a limited protection under the Inheritance (Family Provision) Act, 1938, should a husband leave his money to others when she is not provided for.

One For The Road

THIS photograph was taken in Scotland. Perhaps it indicates one of the

reasons for the popularity of touring holidays in that country!—R. E. HARVEY, Middleton's Lane, Norwich.

Folly And Fortune

YOUNG James Edwards slowly mounting the main steps of St. Paul's Cathedral on a cold and foggy morning was a joy to behold. He neither seemed to know nor care whether matins started at midday or midnight. Anyhow, Jimmy, my boy, matins were at 10 a.m., not 11 a.m., as you state in your admirable life story "Take It From Me" (JOHN BULL, January 10). Your brother Alan *did* have a heavenly voice.—ARTHUR FRITH (late assistant vicar [choral] St. Paul's Cathedral), Hatfield Broad Oak, Herts.

. . . When I was a child I was fascinated by a military-looking gentleman caller at our home, who had a large ginger moustache. It was very stiff and well-waxed into fine points. How I laughed when one side of it came unstuck. Seeing Jimmy Edwards's outsize "handlebars" in your photograph (JOHN BULL, January 10) aroused my wonder and admiration. How does it stay put? How does he produce such natural-looking flowing lines, and even the suspicion of a curl at the tapered ends? Isn't Jimmy ever worried about the possibility of its taking a downward plunge?—MRS. A. A. CLOWES, Homefield, Long Whatton, Loughborough, Leics.

"Assiduous brushing and combing is the answer," says Jimmy. "All external aids to beauty, such as fixatives, should be eschewed. Of course, all moustaches have their off moments, and mine does droop sometimes, especially in wet weather and fog. After a leisurely swim the effect is said to resemble a sea-lion." This week's instalment of "Take It From Me" starts on page 14.

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

IF I WERE STALIN'S WAR CHIEF

by Capt. B. H. Liddell Hart

See announcement on page 28

Dignity Upheld

ON the same bus as myself was a schoolboy, whose head had become stuck in a vase. His mother was rushing him off to hospital. Presumably to avoid attracting attention, she had placed her son's school cap on top of the vase.—MISS L. WILLIAMS, Brodie Avenue, Mossley Hill, Liverpool.

Arctic Health

ALL the Eskimos in the photographs illustrating your series "I Lived With The Eskimos," by Roger Buliard, appear to be plump and healthy. There is not a thin face to be seen. Were the pictures specially selected, or do all Eskimos have that well-nourished look? — D. GUNNING, Gallowhill Quadrant, Coylton, Ayr.

Eskimos have disproportionately broad faces, which give them a healthy look. Although they are generally a healthy people, a simple disease like measles killed thousands of them when it was passed on by Europeans. A diet of raw fish and oil makes them plump and helps to keep them warm.

Viva El Sport

PRINTED in red on the wrapping paper around an orange which I bought were the words, "Spanish footballers wish English footballers prosperity."—G. E. JOICEY, Hillside Crescent, Thornley, Durham.

Strong Metal

YOUR editorial, "Happier New Year" (JOHN BULL, January 3), suggests that titanium is a recently discovered element. But it was

noticed by the Rev. William Gregor in 1789, when he was investigating a peculiar black sand found at Menachan, Cornwall. He named the element menachite. Five years later, a German chemist, Klaproth, discovered a new metal and named it titanium, after the Titans of Greek mythology. Later research by Klaproth in 1797 proved that his titanium and the menachite of Gregor were identical.—S. M., London.

You Can't Miss It

A customer who wanted his radio repaired left a note at our shop which read: "Side door, key under flowerpot." I called at the house, opened the side gate, and was staggered to see hundreds of flowerpots of every conceivable size. After looking under fifty or sixty, I was about to give up in despair when the householder appeared—and produced the key from his pocket.—G. L. MONTAGUE, Ash Tree Way, Croydon, Surrey.

Learn By Letter

OUR local junior library is showing dolls in national costumes, supplied from other libraries throughout the world. The librarian keeps a list of boys and girls in those countries who wish to correspond with British children. In their letters, foreign children often write quite as good English as the average child in this country. The dolls and the letters make geography for children much more real and personal.—LESLEY DALE, St. Luke's Avenue, Ilford, Essex.

Army Slang Best

THE phrase "All Sir Garnet," is much to be preferred to the awful "O.K." I was delighted to see it in the story *Act Of Mercy*, by Francis Tustin (JOHN BULL, January 3). How and where did the saying originate? —JESSIE JAMES, Sheffield.

During the 1880s, when Sir Garnet Wolsey was winning victories in Egypt, the army phrase "All Sir Garnet" came into common usage, indicating that all was going well.

Mystery Tour

PASSENGERS on a bus in Fife were scared when the driver, on reaching a roundabout, proceeded to go round and round it. After ten minutes of this he continued on the normal route. Giddily, I got out of my seat and asked him what he meant by it. He said, "I was bored." — P. S., Glasgow.

The Face Of Art

HENRY MOORE (JOHN BULL, January 3) certainly *does* carve a puzzle. I've been trying to find the meaning of his "Reclining Figure," exhibited during the Festival of Britain at the South Bank, and which the Arts

The "Reclining Figure" now on exhibition in Leeds. Henry Moore in background

Council loaned to this city. I think I've found the solution. The sculpture represents what Henry Moore thinks of the people who pretend to see art and beauty in these things. Where the head should be there is a small bump, cloven at the back, to show how much intelligence he knows they have. The big hole in the "body" is where the stomach ought to be, and this tells them that he knows they haven't got the guts to tell him that the whole thing is darn silly.—R. WEBB, North Lane, Roundhay, Leeds.

. . . Elkan Allan's article on Henry Moore was very interesting. Herbert Read, the famous art critic, has quoted an opinion of Michelangelo that the best way of judging a piece of sculpture is to roll it down a hill. If the figure remained intact, it possessed a fundamental merit, for it must have been designed as a compact form, as all good sculpture should be.—EDNA KEOGH, 29th Avenue, New Housing Estate, Hull.

Henry Moore says: "Michelangelo was just trying to give a general rule, and it applies to stone sculpture only. I have never seen it practised."

Rule Of Reason

THE G.P.O. urges the public to buy books of stamps to ease congestion at post office counters. I recently queued for a long time for a forces air mail letter, which the counter clerk refused to hand over until I had bought a 2½d. stamp as well, although I had a 5s. book of stamps in my pocket. — C. F. HOLLAND, King's Avenue, Whitstable, Kent.

These letters are issued only with the sale of a 2½d. stamp, says the G.P.O. The stationery is free, so the rule prevents waste.

Invisible Barrier

FLYING over Southampton a jet plane caused the well-known noise associated with a plane breaking through the sound barrier. One of a number of people near me said that pilots should not fly so fast over towns. In a serious voice, another man said: "It's not the pilot's fault. The barrier should not be put up over towns."—I. W. G., Southampton.

Old And The New

FRESH supplies of stationery coming into my office have to be put at the bottom of existing stocks, thus ensuring that the new is not used before the old. How do grocers, with a limited amount of space, deal with their incoming supplies, particularly those sold loose in powder form?—MISS M. E. RUTHERFORD, Clarence Road, Hale, Cheshire.

A grocer says: "I order small amounts regularly and often. No grocer would tip new perishable goods into a bin containing old stock. There is too great a danger, particularly in warm weather, of the stock underneath going bad."

Rainbow Labels

ADDRESS labels for packages carried by public transport should be standardized by commercial concerns, so that post office workers and railwaymen would know immediately what they were handling. The labels might be red for glassware, green for perishables, blue for non-fragile, and so on. Surveying the number of broken gifts which arrived at my home over Christmas, I am sure that better methods of labelling would prevent many breakage claims.—G. H. C., Tadworth, Surrey.

Traffic Hazard

CHILDREN under seven have very little knowledge of the rules of the road. Yet parents allow them to use model bicycles and tricycles on busy main roads. The children risk their own and other people's lives.—A. S., Nottingham.

Letters intended for publication should be as brief as possible and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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Fortune is a Woman

by ***WINSTON GRAHAM***

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

YOU MIGHT THINK that the first time I met her hadn't really a lot of significance. Everything has changed so much since, that sometimes it doesn't seem any longer to have happened to her and to me. Yet the more I think of it, the more important it seems to begin there, if anyone is to understand the rest.

It was just before the outbreak of war, and I'd been on the roads for some months, getting odd jobs when and where I could, cadging lifts, sleeping under haystacks—the complete hobo.

She'd had a puncture, and it was getting dark, and she was making a half-hearted attempt at changing the wheel. It was a lonely road, and I expect she was glad to hear my footsteps coming towards her; though I've wondered sometimes that she accepted my offer of help quite so readily. She was only a kid, and I must have looked disreputable.

Anyway, I changed the wheel, and she offered

On an impulse I said: "Are you happy, Sarah?" She looked away, "Yes, happy enough." She said it uncertainly, hesitantly, and I moved closer

THE GIRL IN THE CAR

Winston Graham

SOME TIME AGO, Winston Graham was driving home to Cornwall from London when a girl in a Bentley passed him, driving alone and very fast.

Half an hour later, he passed her when she was getting petrol; then she passed him again. This happened several times during the next 250 miles. "I drive fast and have a fast car," he says, "but I didn't have a chance. I've never known a woman drive so well."

But even the best driver is not proof against punctures. . . . On a lonely Cornish moorland road, Graham found her struggling with a wheel. He changed it for her.

That incident was the germ of *Fortune Is A Woman*. Then, later, a friend who is a Lloyds underwriter happened to mention the insurance adjuster, a new specialist in the insurance world emerging from the old job of the claims assessor, and the tricky inquiries he has to make. "I at once saw it as part of the novel I wanted to write."

His two previous thrillers, *Take My Life* and *Night Without Stars*, have both been filmed. *Night Without Stars*, serialized in JOHN BULL three years ago, was a best-seller in Britain and the U.S.A.

Married, with two children, Graham lives at Perranporth, Cornwall, and works regular office hours at his writing.

me a lift. We were miles from Salisbury, and I didn't look forward to a night under a hedge, so I accepted.

It was a big car, with a well-bred sort of hum. The girl wasn't more than eighteen; tallish and fairly plump, as some girls are at that age. She had dark hair tied loosely back at the nape of her neck, and very pale skin, so smooth that her face seemed a bit unreal, like a cameo, in the occasional lights that passed.

I don't remember exactly what we talked about, except that she mentioned the possibility of war, and I rather let myself go about it, feeling as I did then that I'd nothing to fight for except the privilege of living in the gutter and being kicked around.

There was a rather stony silence after that, until she drew up at some gates and said: "This is where I live. You go straight on for the centre of the town. It's only about a mile."

"Thanks." I opened the door. "And—thanks for the lift."

"Thank you for mending my puncture." She was groping about in her bag, and as I was getting out she put two coins into my hand. I pulled my hand back quickly, and one of the coins rolled on the floor of the car. She began to say something and I began to say something, both at the same time; and just then a man came up out of the darkness.

"Is that you, Sarah? Where have you been? Who is this?" He was about my own height, thin and iron grey.

"I was kept late with Valerie, Daddy. I had a puncture. This man changed the wheel for me, so I gave him a lift."

Her father looked me up and down, from my two-day beard to somebody else's shoes.

"Oh . . . I see," he said stiffly. "Very well. I'm much obliged to you. Good night."

The girl said good night to me a bit more graciously, but I could see she was going to get a talking-to for risking her safety with a tough like me.

I began to walk off down the road. I heard the car move into the drive. It was minutes before I knew I was still holding one of the coins she had given me. It was half a crown.

THE police picked me up next morning about eleven. Was I the man who had changed a wheel for Miss Darnley and had been given a lift afterwards? I said: Supposing I was? Well, would I come along to the station, then? Miss Darnley had lost a diamond bracelet and I was wanted for questioning.

I felt pretty mad about it, and I thought: Perhaps she'll be waiting at the station to accuse me. But when I got there, there was nobody but a bald-headed sergeant and another policeman in a corner, and, of course, a smell of disinfectant. They asked me the usual questions, and then asked if I was willing to be searched.

"O.K.," I said. "If it makes you feel better."

When they'd finished, the sergeant rubbed his bald head and looked at me pretty distastefully and then went back to the outer office to telephone. Though I didn't know it then he was phoning Dr. Darnley, who happened to be one of their local J.P.s. When the sergeant came back, he said: "All right, son, you can go. We're not going to make a charge."

I said: "Thanks. Shall I leave a forwarding address?"

"If you'll take my tip," said the sergeant, "you'll keep your tongue a bit quieter, or one of these days it'll lead you into trouble."

I went down the steps of the police station, shaking the half-crown she'd given me up and down in my hand. I thought with the arrogance of a young man: Someday, maybe, I'll give her this back tenfold. . . . But, of course, I never seriously believed it would happen.

AND, of course, it didn't—not in the grand, adolescent way I dreamed of, anyway; and it was nine years before it happened at all. By then everything had changed for me, and I was a more or less respectable member of the insurance world. War's a crucible. Everything is thrown in; some things come out the better for it—others are badly handled and flawed. It used to astonish me sometimes to think that one result of all the blood, tears, toil and sweat, had been to turn me from a social outcast into a fairly normal member of society—at least so far as outward appearances went.

Although I went into the war determined to do my worst, the life, in a queer way, suited me; and Michael Abercrombie was responsible for the rest. I met him first at an O.C.T.U. in Haifa, and after it was all over he offered me a job in his father's firm of insurance adjusters.

I remember, after meeting his father that first morning, we went out and discussed it over a cup of coffee. He tried to explain what their business was. When a firm or private person suffered loss or damage and made a claim against an insurance company or an underwriter, an adjuster was engaged to examine and assess the loss and adjust the claim so that it was acceptable to both parties.

"We need a man of absolute integrity, pleasant to meet, but able to put over a strong line where it's necessary; a chap who knows his way about and can sum people up."

I shifted uncomfortably. "You know hardly anything about me, Michael. That's an imposing list of qualities."

He laughed. "I think the peace has unhinged

As I helped Sarah from the car, Tracey's voice

you. I've never known you lacking in confidence before."

I thought, well, it's not eight years since I passed the night in Swindon workhouse; it's not much more since I did seven days for hitting a policeman in the eye. Now I was to be Mr. Branwell, with his white collar and his black tie, coming up from Surbiton on the nine fifteen. . . .

"O.K., Michael," I said. "I'll give it a try. And thanks very much."

* * *

I'd been working more or less successfully in the city for two and a half years when a report came through of a fire in a manor house in Kent. I went down and left my car outside the gates and walked up to a big, low, mellow-timbered

came from the darkened doorway. "Bring Oliver in for a drink," he said. "I want to talk to him"

place set among great yew trees and formal gardens; and the door was opened by a plump man in tweeds, who said he was Mr. Tracey Moreton, the owner, and would I come in.

"We've nothing dramatic to show you," he said abruptly, as if apologizing. "The smoke woke us and we were able to keep the fire under until the brigade came. The damage is chiefly in one room."

He led me into a low room at the back of the hall, and there was the usual sort of mess: blackened furniture, and curtains hanging in shreds.

"If you'll excuse me," he said, "I'll wait outside. The smoke gets on my chest."

I had a good look round. Some of the other flimsy things had been burned, and the furniture had been badly charred; but there was no real structural damage except what the firemen had done breaking away the wall round the cupboard where the fire had started.

MR. TRACEY MORETON led me, in a bored way, across to a big drawing-room at the other side of the house and poured me out a whisky and soda.

I said: "It's been a lucky escape. If there'd been more draught you'd have been without a home today. Was there anything of special value in the room?"

He nodded and coughed and put down a glass beside me on a little eighteenth-century table with curved legs. "There was a Birket Foster. It's a bitter blow to lose that."

"I noticed two pictures. One was a sea scene, but they were both too badly burnt——"

"The sea scene was a cheap print. The Foster was of the mill and spinney which used to be at the back of this house. It was specially commissioned by my grandfather. I think it was valued at five hundred when the insurance was taken out, but its sentimental value is a lot more to me." He lit a cigarette but didn't offer me one. After a minute, the whiff of some herbal mixture told me why.

Just then, a young woman came in carrying a bunch of yellow chrysanthemums. She began to say something but stopped when she saw me.

"Oh, sorry, I thought——"

He said casually: "This is Mr. Branwell, who's come about the insurance. My wife."

We muttered the usual sort of polite words, and she went across to the grand piano and began sticking the flowers into a tall, green vase. She didn't recognize me. She obviously hadn't an idea. But I knew her at once. It was queer. I thought I'd forgotten her. But it was just as if somewhere in my mind, in my memory, all the details had been stored and shut away and the sight of her opened them up.

WHEN she went out I took a lot more notice of him while we finished our business together. He was forty or a bit more, with sparse, fair hair climbing at the temples, and a thin moustache that he couldn't leave alone so that his signet ring glinted in the latticed light from the windows. The herbal stuff didn't seem to be doing his breathing any good.

But now I was getting over the surprise of seeing her again. What still surprised me was that it seemed to mean something to me.

After I'd finished my drink, I went back to the study and took a detailed inventory of the damage. With Birket Foster's "Mill and Spinney" to be reckoned in, my first estimate was going to be a lot wide of the mark. Before I left I saw Tracey Moreton again, and after a minute he said: "Were you in the Eighth Army?"

"Yes. . . . Why?"

He shrugged. "Some expression you used. It sounded like the lingo. I was shot down over Tobruk in June, '42."

"I didn't go out until the end of 1941. Were you there later?"

"No, I was living at the expense of the Italian Government."

It's always the same when that sort of thing crops up. He'd been polite before, but bored. Now he had a more friendly tone. He came with me to the door, and I left him there.

I crossed the gravel square and looked across the grounds. Tracey Moreton had gone in. I walked round the house, past an older stone wing and an arched doorway that led to a cobbled courtyard. At the west side the ground fell away gradually and had been made into a series of terraced lawns divided by yew hedges. Behind the house were two greenhouses and some potting sheds. I saw someone moving in one of the greenhouses. It was Mrs. Tracey Moreton.

I went up to the greenhouse.

For a few seconds she didn't see me, and I looked at her. Although the recognition had been instant there were many differences. She'd fined off to slimness; narrow-waisted, dark-lashed, a lovely mouth; her hair was shorter and done differently, was slightly ruffled and shining.

She turned quickly and saw me. She looked faintly surprised.

"Are you looking for my husband?"

"No. . . . I saw you in here. I came to pay an old debt."

"A debt? To me?"

"Yes." I put my hand in my pocket and took out a half-crown. "Before you were

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Mr. Brock plans the Coronation Whoosh!

by RONALD W. CLARK

The king of fireworks means to draw the Queen and her family in flame—and top it all off with the Display of Nine Thousand Bangs

IN THE GROUNDS of Buckingham Palace, workmen were setting up the poles for a private fireworks display in honour of King George VI's birthday. "Suddenly His Majesty appeared," says Alan St. Hill Brock, who has been supervising special firework displays for nearly half a century. "He was taking his morning constitutional round the perimeter path of the grounds, and nobody but myself recognized him. After pausing before he came to the fireworks, he turned back, smiled and said to me: 'I'm not supposed to know anything about this. It's all a secret.'"

The birthday display at the Palace—"a modest little affair well loaded with mechanical pieces, such as the goose that laid the golden eggs, acrobats on the horizontal bar and a cat-fight"—was typical of scores that Alan Brock has planned in almost every part of the world.

A trim, well set-up man who looks more like a retired army officer than a sixty-seven year old firework king, Brock can do every job in the business, from the deceptively simple-looking task of filling and bending a jumping cracker ("a bang at every bend") to planning a £10,000 display such as the one he supervised on VE-night in 1946, from the roof of St. Thomas's Hospital. Now he is busy preparing the South Bank Coronation Display in June.

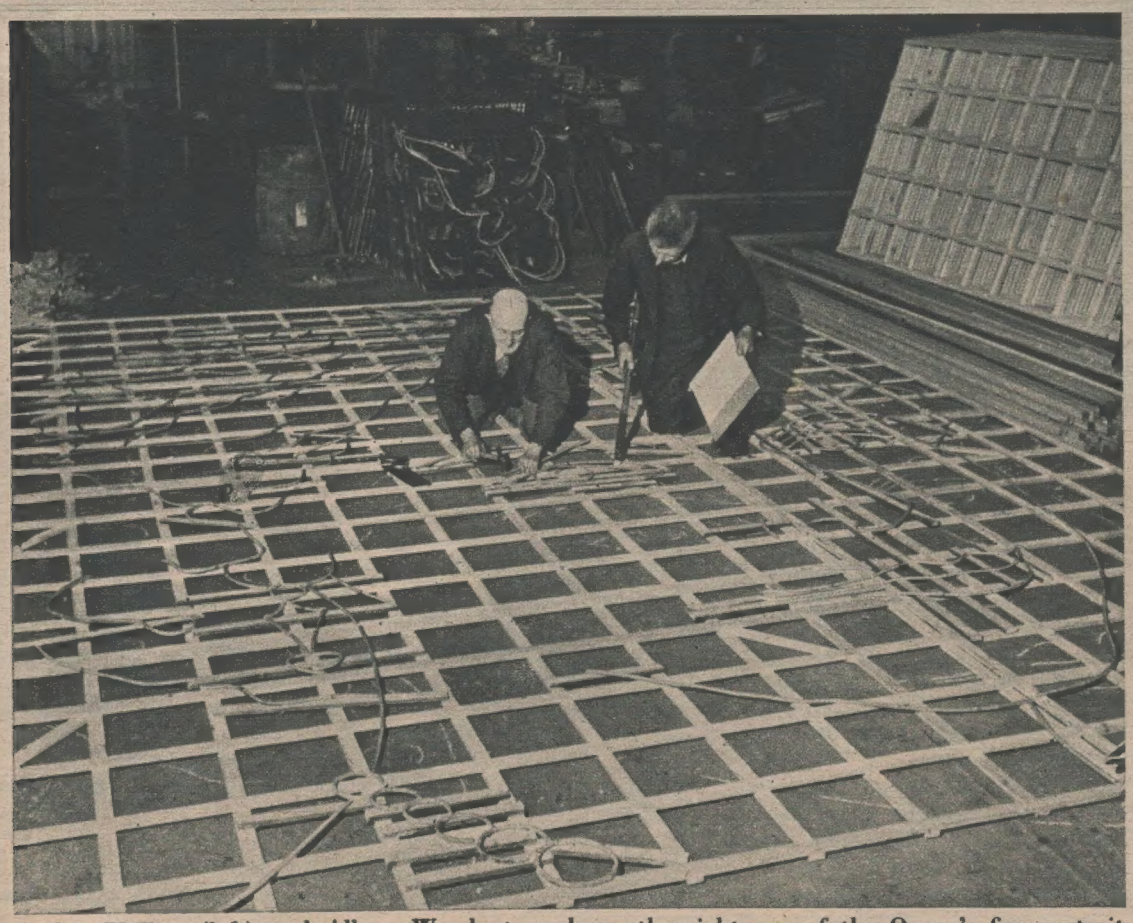
The Brock family has been making fireworks for more than 230 years, and for more than a century it has been planning, producing and firing special "pyrotechnic displays." They have ranged from the illumination by fireworks of the Taj Mahal in India to the display in honour of Viscount Milton's christening, when fifty thousand people watched from the park of Wentworth Woodhouse.

It was a Brock who prepared and fired the displays throughout India during the Prince of Wales's tour in the mid-1870s, and fired the biggest firework display that the New World has ever seen—the Quebec Tercentenary display in 1908. Alan Brock himself planned many of the Coronation displays of 1937. They culminated in the simultaneous flight of 100,000 rockets, bought from makers all over the country, and fired by Royal Navy personnel from the decks of ships being reviewed at Spithead.

At Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee display at the Crystal Palace, a set-piece 200 feet long and 180 feet high showed roses, thistles and shamrocks, and then changed into portraits of Queen Victoria and other members of the Royal Family. "Then there was a brief but disconcerting hitch," says Brock. As the transformation took place, the "eyes" of the portraits were hauled into position. The right eye of the Queen was the business of "Sailor" Sam Cook, a picturesque character who had served in the Crimean War, and who was almost stone deaf. Cook had often pulled ropes to give movement to mechanical pieces, and he assumed that he had to do the same job here. He continued to pull up and down on his rope, and to everyone who tried to interfere he replied: "I am pulling, ain't I?" Queen Victoria continued to wink at a delighted crowd.

There was also the occasion when, at Scarborough, a large fire-picture of the Duke of Cambridge was lit. "In those days the colour of the 'lances'—the fireworks about as thick as a cigarette, which make up the set-piece—was indicated only by a thin band on them. Something had gone wrong with the assembly on the wooden frames, and the Duke appeared in perfect outline—but with a green nose."

Brock (centre) sees a new firework tested.



Archie Phillips (left) and Albert Wood at work on the right eye of the Queen's fire portrait

Half Mile Of Fireworks

Plans for the coming Coronation displays began many months back in Brock's two-hundred-acre factory on the outskirts of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. Hundreds of special Coronation display sets, ranging in price from ten guineas to £500 each, are being completed in the 160 buildings, and nearly £100,000 worth of special Coronation fireworks will be exported during the next few months.

"We are firing more than a score of displays, with three major ones at Liverpool and other big ones at Dagenham and Hove," says Brock. "The hour-long display on the South Bank will be the biggest we have ever fired. There will be the longest Zambesi Waterfall we have tried in this country—roughly about one thousand yards of it, stretching across the river along Hungerford Bridge and along the South

He can do every job in the business: plan a £10,000 show—or fill a jumping cracker

Making a Coronation firework. Safety rules have to be strict

Bank. The London County Council is calling it 'the Display of Nine Thousand Bangs!'"

Many of the shells will probably be fired electrically, a method which ensures that all the rockets go up at exactly the same time. "The highlight of the performance will be the firing of four portraits, each forty feet high, of the Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles and Princess Anne," says Brock.

The first step in preparing a fire-portrait is to take a large sheet of paper, ruled into inch squares, and draw on it the outline of the portrait. All superfluous detail must be omitted, and although the portrait may be stylized it must be immediately recognizable.

Portrait Drawn In Cane

The basis of all portraits and other set-pieces are wooden frames ten feet wide by five feet high, looking rather like garden trellis work and divided by light battens into squares a foot each way. First the frames are laid on a concrete floor. Then, matching the squares on the paper with the squares on the frame, the portrait is drawn in chalk on the floor, underneath the frames.

Albert Wood and Archie Phillips, who between them have nearly sixty years' service with Brock, then take over. They nail long lengths of rattan to the battens of the frames, following the chalk marks on the floor, and thus build a "cane portrait." Small wire nails, pointed at both ends, are driven into the cane every three or four inches. "On to these pegs," says Phillips, "the separate lances are fixed. Then they are joined by quick-match."

On each forty-foot portrait there are about four thousand separate lances, joined up by about a third of a mile of quick-match. Before the job is completed, seven different operations have to be carried out on each lance. "If that sounds a lot of work," says Brock, "remember that on some of the great Crystal Palace set-pieces there were up to thirty-five thousand lances, and three miles of quick-match."

The match itself is made by fifty-nine year old Henry Austin, who draws ordinary cotton wick through a tube of gunpowder paste, on to a six-foot frame that holds three hundred yards of the match at a time. Harry turns out about five miles of quick-match a day. As he joined the firm straight from school, he has produced more than 50,000 miles of it—enough to go twice round the world.

"Since the first fire-portrait was made in 1879, there have been few crowned heads whose picture we have not designed for firing," says Brock. "Cocked hats provide special problems; to get the hat in, the scale of the face has to be reduced, and may be out of proportion with other portraits. Beards, too, are a problem. There was one man for whom we regularly arranged a fire-portrait. Finally, we had to turn the three-frame portrait into a four-frame one to include all his beard."

One of the most ticklish jobs Brock has handled was the Crossing the Line display held on Vanguard during the Royal visit to South Africa in 1947. "It was the most ambitious effort of its kind ever carried out in such surroundings," he says. "Two petty officers from the ship came to the works at Hemel Hempstead for an intensive course in pyrotechny before the ship sailed. Quite large shells were fired during the display, and two big tree-pieces were concealed in the hawse pipes and raised into position just prior to firing."

Firing By Walkie-talkie

At Capetown, a special aerial display was fired on the Mole in honour of Princess Elizabeth's twenty-first birthday. Roy Brock, Alan's brother, flew out to supervise. "The display was fired with the Vanguard as a background, just as the Royal Party left Government House, a few miles away by road, after dinner. It was the first time we used walkie-talkie radios in a display, and it was lucky we did, for the timing was twice delayed during the evening."

Every week three hundred Brock employees, about half of them women, mix and pack into fireworks three tons of gunpowder and ten tons of saltpetre, charcoal and sulphur. They are helped by about two hundred "home workers," who make the cardboard firework cases in their cottages, and deliver them to the weekly Brock lorry which calls on them.

"Among the special items we make are long-burning flares for the Scottish Electricity Board," says Brock. "When the overhead grid lines have to be repaired, the current is naturally switched off. When the job is done it would sometimes take the linesmen hours to get from the mountainside to the nearest phone box to tell the power station to switch on. Instead, they light an 'all-clear' flare."

Even the smallest fireworks, such as "Tuppenny Glitters," are made under the same strict safety regulations as the biggest set-pieces. Matches, lighters and cigarettes are taken off the workers as they enter the factory. In the small two-man or three-man buildings (twenty-five yards apart) everyone wears rubber overshoes to prevent any chance of a boot nail producing a spark.

Once They Were "Immoral"

The Crystal Palace displays provided the background to much of Alan Brock's life. Between 1865, when C. T. Brock persuaded the directors that fireworks were not of "an immoral tendency," and 1936, when the Crystal Palace burned down ("nothing to do with fireworks," asserts Brock), the firm gave more than 1,500 displays to 20,000,000 people.

"We often used to mix with the crowds after the displays to see what the people thought about them," he says. "Fathers, in particular, seemed to do very well out of them. Typical was one whom we heard telling his son about the displays when *he* was a boy. After them, he said, he went round the grounds picking up the stars which were, he said, put out by the rain. 'From these,' he told his admiring youngster, 'I made my own fireworks.'"

The truth, of course, is that stars, once lighted, will burn even under water. THE END

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARTHUR WHITTINGTON

A HOUSEFUL OF MONKEYS

by **JONAS LAMPTEY**

ILLUSTRATED BY WEGNER

He loathed them; the very feel of them made him sick. And now one of the little beasts had wrecked his home

HE WAS NOT going to shoot Beddoes. He would shoot at the monkeys. He wouldn't get more than one or two before they scattered, but that would be something. Godden was a good marksman. In the old days he had shot for the Colony at Bisley. He could as easily miss Beddoes as hit him. In the heavy, over-reaching silence of the African night he waited on his bungalow veranda for Beddoes to appear, his gun across his knees, a whisky and soda on the table beside him and a row of six cartridges.

Beddoes was deaf. That was why his loudspeaker was always blaring at full strength, though tonight it was silent. He was also mad. That was why he kept monkeys. The loudspeaker and the monkeys were driving Godden mad also.

From the rooms behind him came the tinkle of glass and china as his cook, who was standing-in for the dismissed steward-boy, swept up the debris which the monkey had left.

Beddoes was a tanned, withered little man of about forty-five, dressed generally in a buttonless khaki shirt and well-worn shorts of the same colour. He was partly bald. His eyes were beady as if years of exposure to the West African sun had drawn the eyelids close together, leaving slits barely wide enough for the pupils. His forehead was permanently puckered as if to keep the slits from closing altogether. His voice was loud and hoarse.

The two bungalows faced each other across the road. Attempts to cultivate screens of shrubberies had been made by previous occupiers, but in the sandy soil of Port Jack's residential area they were thin and stunted. Only the palm trees flourished, and their splayed branches were well above the rooftops. Thus, from his chair on the veranda, Godden, a large, heavy-featured man, had a clear view into the small single-storey bungalow opposite.

The least intimation of Beddoes's movements had become a rasp to his nerves. Whenever Beddoes ground away at his self-starter or raced his engine to hear whether it had sparked, Godden would stir impatiently as if to turn his back on the interruption and banish it from his mind. But then would come the raucous bars of music heralding the next news bulletin, mingled with the screech of parrots and chirruping of canaries, Beddoes's other pets. And then, its horn hooting, his car would swing out of the gate while the loudspeaker continued its strident descant. For Beddoes never bothered to turn the radio off. As part of the Port Jack rediffusion service it droned on ceaselessly, from programme to programme, hour after hour, inhuman and remorseless.

If Beddoes went away for a day or two the shutters were closed, the doors locked and the dark, deserted bungalow echoed ghost-like to the applause at concerts, the booming of Big Ben and hollow voices addressing empty rooms. One night, Godden, sleepless and exasperated, had stormed across and rattled the door handle and wrenched at the shutters. But there was no means of entry and the mechanical churning-out of sound had continued on into the night.

To know Beddoes was mad one had only to watch him with his monkeys. They were secured by ropes which ran from pegs in the ground to short pieces of chain round their waists. They had long, sinuous arms and legs and on these they would go striding purposefully across the scant grass until the rope pulled them up, when they would swing round and continue their restless prowling in a wide half-circle, their long tails erect.

The monkey's invasion of Godden's bungalow that afternoon did not stand alone. Only last week there had been another encounter.

"There's a cute little feller! There's a cute little feller! Got all caught up, didn't you? There's a cute little feller!"

Through his gimlet eyes, Beddoes had grinned up at Godden, returning from his evening walk. The monkey he was holding nestled against his shirt, one of its paws resting on his bare chest.

"I had eight once," he shouted hoarsely, "but two got away, so I've only got six now. Funny little beggars, aren't they? I get hours of amusement out of 'em."

Jerkily the monkey moved its midget head while its jaws munched at something held in its black, wizened little hands.

GODDEN had kept his distance. With his hair brushed back and perfectly parted, his white shirt and trousers fresh from the laundryman's table, his tie held in place by a gold pin, he made Beddoes look almost destitute. He detested Beddoes for his shoddiness, his grinning heartiness, his assumption that everybody else liked monkeys, too.

"A boy brought me this one," Beddoes continued at the top of his voice. "They catch 'em in the forest, you know. I gave five bob for this one. Friendly little chap, isn't he? Feel his hand, eh? Soft as a woman's."

From his pocket, Beddoes produced a lump of sugar. The monkey turned it over, short-sightedly scrutinizing it. Despite his repugnance, Godden was fascinated, and before he could move there was a pull at his trouser leg and something soft and sinewy sprang lightly up his back on to his shoulder. He exclaimed loudly and his quickly raised hand touched the furry object that squatted beside his head.

A hand reached out and jerked up the rifle.

The monkey began to chatter. From Beddoes there was a roar of hoarse laughter.

"There's a clever little boy!" he cried, doubled up with mirth. "How'd you get up there, eh? There's a clever little boy! Affectionate little beggars, aren't they? Clever little boy!"

Maddened beyond control by the touch of the grey fur against his cheek, Godden seized the monkey by one of its limbs and hurled it from him, with all the disgust of one casting off an evil thing. The monkey cantered over the grass and ran up the nearest palm tree, its chain rattling against the bark.

"I can watch 'em for hours," cried Beddoes, still highly amused. "As good as a comic show, I reckon, don't you? Up to all kinds of tricks, they are. One of 'em got away the other day and hid up a tree. Had to give a boy a shilling to bring him down. Artful little dodgers! The way they cuddle up at night, too!"

Godden's sickened expression had not left him. He was rubbing his cheek and closing and unclosing his hand, working the fingers against

Godden was taken completely by surprise. He swung round, his face suddenly dark and angry

the palm as if they had been contaminated. Abruptly he turned and went into his bungalow, that temple of silver, glass and mahogany where order and cleanliness were the idols, and the aroma of polish pervaded like incense. In the bathroom he washed his hands, soaping and rinsing them again and again. In all his movements there was an intensity of purpose, almost fanatical, as if it were the taint not only of a monkey's paw but of a whole continent which had to be eradicated.

He had always said that when he was fifty he would quit the country; pack up and go home for good. Yet at fifty-three he was still here. He was a senior accountant in a government department, never likely to rise any higher. West Africa, with its gaudy, flaunting colours which he could see only as masks to squalor and rottenness, held no more prizes for him. He had fought its corrupting influences, yielded nothing to them, kept his self-respect, and if he did not want to die here it was time to get out. But having no family he could not readily abandon his settled existence, although the form of that existence had changed with the years. He had become a recluse.

One by one his friends had dropped out. They had retired, died or been transferred, generally on promotion, to colonies with more salubrious climates. No one came to see him now. It had got about that he did not welcome visitors—he, Bill Godden, who had kept open house in the old days when his hospitality had been a by-word. But he had not kept up with new faces and new ways, and there were many new ways in these days of political change.

That steward-boy of his, for example, whom he had summarily dismissed for being absent from the bungalow and thus enabling the monkey to get in and have a free run of the place—as likely as not he would go off and lodge a complaint with the Labour Department against wrongful dismissal, and Godden would find himself being summoned to some ridiculous arbitration. Not like the old days. Not at all like the old days.

THE same exaggerated legality had confronted him when he complained to the Health Authorities about the monkeys. He had seen the Medical Officer of Health personally. Old Dr. McGregor would have had the monkeys and all the rest of the menagerie off the residential area in five minutes. Mere mention of the matter over a drink would have been enough. "Aye! Just ye leave it to me!" But there was a young chap in the Health Office now who paid meticulous attention to the regulations and whose chief interest was getting the natives to wear shoes. "Monkeys? Mm—well—can we really call them a danger to public health? Do you think so? Can you actually prove nuisance?"

In recent years Godden had withdrawn more and more into himself, taking pride in his house as an outpost of order and good taste; taking pride also in his glass and china—a few pieces he had picked up during his leaves, nothing very precious or of great antiquity, but good as far as they went, a pleasure to look at, all he had to show for life anyway—and now mostly smashed.

There were his servants whom he had had fifteen years and who attended to him and ran his house with quiet, well-drilled precision. They welcomed him back after every leave, but he never felt any affection for them. He would have scoffed at the idea that they could feel any affection for him. They would do him down if they could. And now Issaka had left the house unguarded for ten critical minutes, and Godden had angrily dismissed him.

The running of the house had thus been fatally disrupted, for Godden hadn't the patience to begin training anyone else to his exacting standards. And, finally, there were the evenings which he had enjoyed on his veranda in the African silence which no cataclysm of total war or social upheaval had yet shattered—Africa did have a certain charm away from the heat and clamour and smells of the town—but the evenings as he had known them had gone, too, terminated by a blaring loudspeaker and Beddoes's hoarse yells of endearment to his pets.

Lately, Godden had avoided his veranda after the heat of the day because this was when Beddoes, while it was still light, could be seen walking round his garden and visiting each monkey in turn. He would bend down and with his head slightly on one side indulge in earnest conversation.

"There's a pretty little girl! Have a peanut. Pretty little girl!"

Each monkey had its own hut built of grass and palm branches, and these were spaced over the garden, together with erections of parallel bars and trapezes equipped with bells ("best idea of the lot, I reckon, don't you?") which Beddoes had contrived for the monkeys' diversion. Beddoes himself could scarcely hear the bells, but they seemed to excite the monkeys, and they certainly excited Godden.

AND there was Beddoes's habit, most revolting of all to Godden's very strict notions of hygiene, of sharing his meals. The table would be laid on the stoep outside the front door. Beddoes would sit at the end, and along both sides would be two or three high stools for the monkeys, with plates of food in front of them. Then one of the monkeys would reach out and seize a piece of food from Beddoes's plate, scramble down from its stool and sit on its haunches a few yards away, nibbling.

Beddoes would roar with laughter.

"Now then, saucy little beggar! Forgotten your table manners, eh? Not like your sister." Laying down his knife, he would stroke the monkey beside him and take it on his knees. "Good-mannered little girl, that's what she is."

He had a floodlight fixed over the door to illuminate the garden, and beneath it he would sit in a deckchair until late at night, throwing food for the monkeys to scrap over; while Godden, behind shut windows and drawn curtains, would give a fastidious inspection to the after-dinner coffee which the steward-boy brought him, letting the small flyproof covers fall with a clink of their glass beads upon the tray.

It was when he returned from the office at noon that Godden had found one of the monkeys occupying an armchair in the sitting-room. With one arm it clasped a tin of cigarettes, some of which had been nibbled into moist pulp. Shreds of tobacco lay over the cushions. Before

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TAKE IT FROM ME (4) by JIMMY EDWARDS

Jimmy the washout wins his wings

Stranded in the Washout Squadron, Jimmy and his friend made a pact. They were going to be pilots—or bust. . . . Another light-hearted chapter from the famous comedian's life-story

AFTER OUR DISMAL FAILURE on the air navigation course, my friend Frank George and I were posted, in the summer of 1941, to Trenton, a huge Royal Canadian Air Force station on the north shore of Lake Ontario.

A main road ran right through the middle of the station. On one side was the aerodrome, with all its hangars and workshops; on the other was located the administrative headquarters; and on the very shore of the lake was a large, disused seaplane hangar. I mean it was disused for seaplanes. Now, thousands of "washouts"—failures from all sorts of air-crew courses—were billeted in it. It was our new home.

Our morale, like that of most men in the "Washout Squadron," was at rock bottom. Before leaving the navigation school, Frank and I had been given a terrific dressing down by the wingco instructor. "You're not fit to sweep a hangar," he had said, and despite our vigorous denials, had even accused us of *trying* to fail the course.

The atmosphere at Trenton did not help our morale, either. There was little to do, except wait for your case to be considered by the re-selection board—then wait, once again, for a posting to a new course of training. The wing commander in charge gave each new intake a little speech of welcome. Frank and I listened as we stood together, surrounded by a strange batch of failures. "We look on the air-crew jobs as a ladder," the wingco said. "The pilot, of course, is on the top rung, followed by the observer, wireless operator and air gunner. You can go down the ladder, but not up."

After listening to this homily, we were dismissed. Frank George said to me: "Ladder or no, I'm certainly not going to be a wireless operator-air gunner. As far as I'm concerned, it's pilot or nothing."

"Same with me," I said. We shook hands.

"Whatever happens," Frank said, "let's stick together on this, Jimmy."

At this time, it was unheard of for anyone to try to climb up the rungs of the figurative ladder. Frank and I were well aware of this, but we could not forget the promise made to us at Cambridge that we were being sent to Canada to be trained as pilots. Besides, I knew that I would be even worse at wireless operating than I had been at navigating, and the thought of twenty-two weeks on the Morse code was more than I could bear.

Jimmy and some of the Tiller Girls in *London Laughs*, his latest successful West End show

Interviews Were Stormy

As the result of our joint determination, our reselection board interviews were stormy. "But, once and for all, you cannot be pilots!" we were told over and over again. We replied: "We will accept nothing else." The deadlock held. Since we were volunteers, our consent was necessary before we could be posted to a specific new duty. It must have been a trying time for the officers on the board. Ironically, the day I arrived at Trenton, a complete failure from the R.A.F. point of view, the post brought me my degree as Bachelor of Arts from Cambridge.

We were not a happy band in the Washout Squadron, and it was a cheerful airman named Baker who did most to keep our spirits from sagging permanently. We had been issued with an old-fashioned type of pith helmet at Port Albert, our previous station, to protect us from the intense heat of the Ontario summer. They looked as if they had been resurrected from stores left over from the Boer War. One sunny day, Baker said: "What do you say we wear our pith helmets, chaps?" Low spirited as we were, it seemed a novel idea. We dug those extraordinary pieces of headgear out of our kit-bags and wore them for the rest of the hot spell.

The first time we went out of the main gate, the Canadian corporal on duty stared at us in amazement. "You can't wear those things outside," he protested. Baker waved his hand airily. "Special R.A.F. issue," he said, and we swept grandly past and into the town.

We paraded up and down the main street, which was part of the main highway between Toronto and Montreal. The townspeople couldn't keep their eyes off those wonderful tropical helmets. They had never seen anything quite like them. One Canadian even offered Baker

Canada, 1942: Jimmy Edwards, newly commissioned R.A.F. pilot, in a Battle—a plane used for air-to-air target practice. Jimmy towed the target

ten dollars for his. "I couldn't possibly, old man," Baker told him. "This hat has been through too many campaigns for me to let it go for such a low price." Since, at the then rate of exchange, this was the equivalent of £2 10s., I thought—and still think—that Baker paid a rather high price to keep his gag going. At least we got a laugh out of it, however, and laughs were hard to come by during that period.

Eventually, bored with idleness, I went to see the warrant officer to beg for a job. Unfortunately, no sooner had I made my request than the phone rang. I heard him say: "Why, sure, Why, certainly. I've got just the man in here now. I'll send him right over." He replaced the receiver. "All right, Edwards, you asked for a job. Here it is. Report to the Digger."

The Digger was the nickname given to the place of detention. For the Washout Squadron it was improvised in three or four large rooms in one corner of the hangar. At that time there were not enough station police to go round, and I was given an armband lettered "S.P." The moment I put it on, I joined the ranks of the most detested group on the station.

My duties were to accompany the detainees on whatever activity they were given during my hours of duty. Sometimes I took them to meals. Or I marched them to a large field within the camp boundaries, where they were set to work picking up large stones and placing them in piles. I was unarmed and the same rank as they were, so my authority over them was nil.

Prisoner Pulled His Leg

One Texan, who had been failed in his pilot's course for low flying, delighted in pulling my leg. With a pickaxe in his hand, he would drawl: "Edwards, I guess I'm going to sink this into the small of your back." Once he said: "What would you do, Edwards, if I was to drop this pick and just walk away?"

"Well," I said, uncertainly, "I suppose I'd ask you to come back." He laughed uproariously, but he always did what he was told, in spite of his talk.

Eventually, at my fifth reselection board, matters came to a head. "Edwards," the flight lieutenant said to me in exasperation, "as you've been told many times, you cannot become a pilot. The only alternative is to accept your discharge." I had not even realized that, being a volunteer, this course was open to me. At the same time, I knew that if I did take my discharge I would at once become available for call-up into any one of the other Services. Perhaps, I thought desperately, I can get into the Fleet Air Arm as a pilot.

"All right," I said, "I'll take the discharge." In his interview, Frank George said the same thing. We then waited for our posting back to England. All this caused quite a sensation in the Washout Squadron. In a day or two, we boarded the train with tickets through to Halifax. The train started. Frank George

Frank George: he and Jimmy were rookies together and shared many adventures in Canada. He is today a lecturer at Bristol University

turned to me and said: "I've had enough of this nonsense, Jimmy. Let's get off at the next stop and take a train to Ottawa. I think we've still got a chance if we see Group Captain X." I remembered that a flight lieutenant at Port Albert had given Frank the group captain's name, saying that he was a helpful man to get in touch with if Frank ever ran into trouble.

"But we can't do that," I protested.

"Nobody will ever know," Frank said. "I'll go and see the G.C. and ask him if he can do anything. Besides, it's the last chance we have."

"All right," I agreed, hesitantly. "I suppose we haven't anything to lose."

We arrived in Ottawa that same day, and made our way to R.A.F. headquarters. Frank asked to see the group captain. He was shown in. Full of doubts, I waited nervously outside. Presently, the door opened. "Well, what happened?" I asked Frank, my heart beating madly.

"I think it's going to be all right," he said. "We are to be held here while they go into the matter with the Air Ministry in London."

Saved—By Group Captain X

That evening we found ourselves, the only two Englishmen there, billeted at the R.C.A.F. station at Rockcliffe, just outside Ottawa. We hung about for a month, drinking and wasting time, but nothing happened. Frank decided to see the group captain once again. I waited outside as before. After a while, the door opened and Frank poked his head out. "Come in, Jimmy," he said. "Try to look your smartest."

I straightened my tie, marched in boldly and executed the crispest salute I could muster. The group captain, a big, grey-haired, friendly looking man, asked me a few questions. Then he picked up the telephone. "I want these two airmen, Edwards and George, sent on the next pilots' course, wherever it happens to be," he said. He put down the receiver. "How's that?" he grinned.

The next course turned out to be at Swift Current, a small prairie town in Saskatchewan, and we arrived there in the best of spirits, keen to begin our flying training in the Tiger Moths used at this Elementary Flying Training School. Eagerly, we presented ourselves to the squadron

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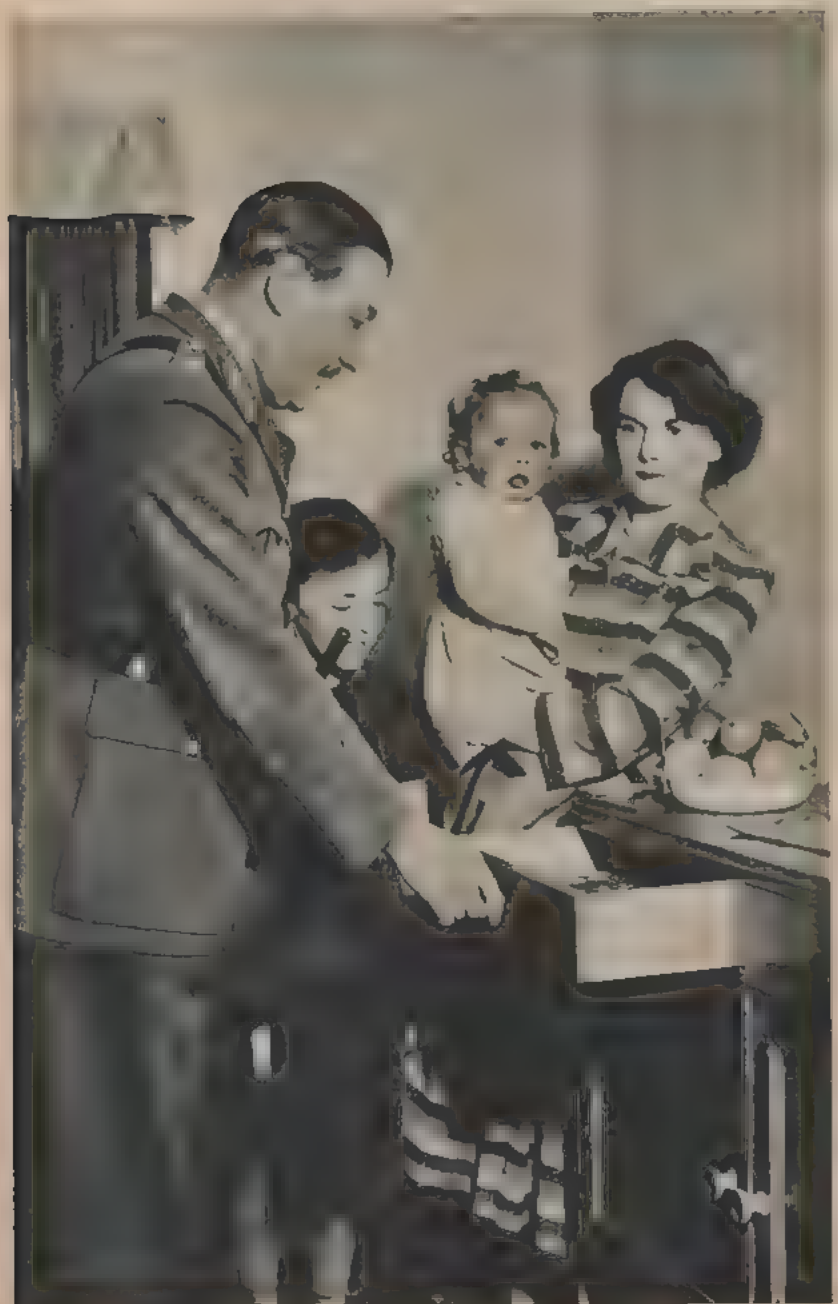
Getting the stuff to the troops

by ERIC BENNETT

Concluding the story of the men who keep the fighting soldiers supplied with everything from a tank to a letter from home



The army's housing chief tests a drawer: General Ritchie in Aldershot's married quarters

As received in the control office of the Port of London Authority, the message said: "RUSSIAN SHIP COMING UP THE THAMES." Signals were hastily consulted and checked. No berth had been booked for a Russian ship and, according to the records, none was due

Then up steamed the coaster Katherine II, flying a blue ensign with crossed swords upon it. The message was reconstrued. It should have read, "RATION SHIP COMING. . . ." For Katherine II is a ship of the Royal Army Service Corps fleet, and her blue ensign with the crossed swords symbol of the army is the internationally recognized flag of the R.A.S.C. afloat. The fleet, which is under the command of a soldier, Quartermaster-General Sir Ouvry Roberts, is a motley collection, ranging from tank landing ships to target towers and harbour launches.

It is manned by civilian crews, and the largest ships in it, six thousand ton L.S.T.s, are run by Merchant Navy officers. But it is very much an army show, and the army is secretly rather proud about its stake in the Admiralty's domain. There is even a military dockyard, or rather boat stores, at Barry, in South Wales, where the craft are serviced and where troops of the Royal Engineers are taught watermanship in fourteen-foot dinghies.

Launches Instead Of Trucks

Diesel-engined target-towing craft and radio-controlled Queen Gull target towers are operated by the fleet for gunnery practice by coastal batteries. Tank landing craft are used to dump faulty ammunition into the sea. Even army firefloats are in the fleet. On some West African stations, where the coastal and jungle roads are long and winding, army harbour launches maintain the lines of communication.

The army's fleet is one unit in the complex organization which operates the lines of communication. Road transport, with its complicated variety of military forms, the fleet, and air dispatch are all the concern of the R.A.S.C. So is the most vital commodity used by a modern army—petrol.

Besides providing drivers and vehicles for the whole army, the corps also has to train specialist crews, like the men who handle bridging conveyors for the transport of Bailey bridge parts and pontoons, and the drivers of amphibious assault craft. Although amphibians are not used in peacetime, there is a regular drivers' course on them at Cairnryan in Wigtownshire. In the same way, the R.A.S.C. continues with courses in the management of horses and mules, to preserve the technique. Mules—and elephants—were both found invaluable in certain theatres of the last war.

Another specialized job is the driving of tank transporters. Handling these twenty-one feet long trucks loaded with tanks up to forty-five tons or more is a tricky business, and when one of the tank transporter company's convoys sets out from its station at Retford, in Nottinghamshire, the movement has to be planned like a minor battle operation.

A Stream Of Protests

The route to the destination is carefully charted on detailed maps. Police of every county and borough through which the transporters will pass are informed. All bridges are checked for weight-carrying capacity, and an advance party surveys dangerous corners. Even after all these precautions, it is usual for each operation to be followed by a stream of letters claiming that bricks were knocked off garden walls, that windows were broken by vibration and hedges damaged by swinging transporters.

In spite of this, the tank transporter company has not been involved in any serious accident. The worst that has happened recently was when a tank, insecurely fastened, rolled

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Three quarters of a million people flock to Gwrych Castle every year. Some of the locals wince when they see them coming. Others call it the idea of the century

Salts, with Randolph Turpin, on the battlements at Gwrych. "Keep 'em laughing" is his success formula

Leslie Salts, king of the annual outing

by DAVID CLAYTON

He has turned his castle into a showplace where millions can taste life in a Stately Home for a shilling a day. It meant spending £165,000—but his star attraction did not cost a penny

EVERY AFTERNOON throughout the summer, usually after a hurried lunch, Leslie T. Salts, proprietor and lord of the manor of Gwrych Castle, takes a stroll among his £20,000 collection of paintings and quietly attaches himself to one or other of the parties as they stream round, catalogue in hand. Salts hopes that if he goes on doing this long enough he will solve a mystery that has been bothering him for a year.

Gwrych (pronounced Goo-reek) Castle, which the brochures describe as "the showplace of Wales," holds many attractions for the 750,000 holidaymakers who visit it every summer. There are battlements to climb, dungeons to explore, a miniature railway, a zoo, an aquarium, a chance to see Randy Turpin punching his sparring partners—and, of course, the paintings, most of them big and heavily gilded.

Salts, who was an advertising artist before earning his present northern reputation of being "King of the Annual Outing," is gratified that the visitors like his paintings. What puzzles him is that everybody's favourite is a picture that just is not there.

As the parties move slowly round the Great Hall, with Salts strolling along behind, they are brought up short by the people who always block the way as they stand in front of an empty frame. The catalogue describes it as "Dead Rabbit, by Duval," but all that visitors see is a hand-painted sign and a yellowing newspaper cutting. The sign announces "This picture stolen from the Castle." The newspaper account, which everybody, according to Salts, reads at least twice and usually out loud, for the benefit of those behind, tells how one evening last year an unknown thief slashed the picture from its frame and made off with it.

As a shrewd showman, Salts confesses that he has been tempted once or twice to wish that visitors would discuss some of the other attractions he has installed at a total cost of £165,000. But he is now resigned to the fact that for the rest of their stay most of them will go on arguing about what kind of a man would want to make off with a dead rabbit like that. Only once has he allowed himself to be drawn into the discussion, and he has regretted it ever since.

One afternoon, early this season, he joined a party as usual, lingered around as they read, and then heard a Yorkshire voice say: "And what do *you* think of it all, Mr. Salts?"

At this, the whole party, drawn by the attraction of being able to speak to a genuine lord of the manor in the flesh, crowded round. Salts decided to attempt a joke. "Oh, I don't know," he said quietly. "Must have been a rabbit fancier. Rabbit fanciers are queer folk, you know."

"That taught me to check up on my bookings before opening my mouth," Salts says today. "They might have been a Band of Hope, a darts club, or an annual church outing, but, of course, they weren't—they were a rabbit and poultry fanciers' club from Yorkshire."

From all over the north and the Midlands every day, including Sundays, coach parties descend upon Gwrych Castle to spend the day.

"Salts," says the proprietor of a fleet of motor coaches, "has done for the old-fashioned day trip what Butlin did for the holiday camp—he has given it the glamour that was needed and which nobody had thought of providing before. Salts has the idea of the century there at Gwrych. People like to play king of the castle, especially when it costs only a bob a nob."

Locally, as everyone expected when he bought the castle in 1949, Salts has his detractors. Gwrych, which was built in 1815 on the site of a much older fort, has always been the "Big House" of the district, and there are people who still wince when they see motor

Gwrych has the attractions of a holiday camp. Many people like to pretend they are staying there

coaches in the huge car park which was once a meadow, and hear the loudspeakers of "Radio Gwrych", hidden in the battlements playing music to greet the trippers.

On the other hand, there is a much larger pro-Salts faction — shopkeepers and petrol station proprietors among them—who admit that he has doubled or trebled their turnover.

There are legends that Salts has grown fabulously rich in providing a day out for millions of visitors. One story, current in Rhyl, is that every night he is to be seen pushing a wheelbarrow piled high with shillings from his box office to the castle strong-room. On especially busy weekends, such as Whitsun and August Bank Holiday, knowing people swear that he has to make two trips.

He Meant To Retire

Before buying Gwrych for just over £100,000, Leslie Salts spent many years as proprietor of a holiday camp at Morecambe. When he sold out at a substantial profit in 1949 he decided to retire, and looked round for a house. While on his way to Rhyl from his native Liverpool he remembered the big castle on the hill which he had glimpsed as a boy when he used to go on Sunday school outings. He heard that it was for sale, and within twenty-four hours had bought it, although he had at that time only a hazy idea of what he would do with it.

Still thinking back to his boyhood, he remembered those dismal day trips to the sea, the dreary hours of sheltering in arcades when it rained, the harassed parents rushing around looking for their lost children, the bad food and the bad tempers.

He set to work to turn Gwrych into a centre where a coach party could spend the entire day without losing sight of each other, and began to stock it with so many things to see and do that boredom was almost impossible.

Next he hired a local staff of 125 waitresses, cooks, attendants and entertainers, preached to them his formula for giving day tourists a good time ("Keep 'em laughing, keep 'em happy") and told travel agents that the more motor coaches he saw at Gwrych, the happier he would be. This alone, outing organizers now say, was revolutionary, for six out of ten road-houses in Britain display "No Coaches Served" signs.

Salts not only went out of his way to welcome coach parties, but even provided rest-rooms complete with bunks and free meals for the drivers, and in some cases a substantial cash bonus out of each shilling entrance fee.

Day trippers who had come to accept the fact that in some holiday resorts they were regarded as untouchables were at first overwhelmed by such small kindnesses as an official "Gwrych Welcome." Salts says: "They had been bitten so many times that at first they used to ask me right out, 'Where's the catch?'"

Salts is proud of his welcome formula. As soon as a coach pulls up under the trees, Ted Lewis, the jovial official greeter, compère and amateur mass-hypnotist ("I only use it for healing these days"), wearing a blazer with the Gwrych coat of arms embroidered on the breast pocket, steps aboard to receive the party on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Salts. Lewis, who was a concert party entertainer for many years, has a large store of jokes for every occasion, and claims that he has never yet met a party which wasn't laughing its collective head off in less than the two minutes it takes him to line them up for a group photograph.

From high up in the ramparts, Radio Gwrych has meanwhile started to play some carefully chosen music, such as "Does Your Mother Come From Ireland" for Merseyside-Irish parties, "Ilkla Moor Baht 'At" for Yorkshire contingents and "Sospan Fach" for outings from South Wales.

There is usually a time lag, depending on the age group of the trippers, before the party has climbed the hill. The road is steep, and although Salts has provided seats half-way up, progress is slow and breathless. It is often suggested to Salts that he should level off the gradient. He always thanks people for the suggestion. "Perhaps you are right," he agrees blandly, with a glance at the thirsty climbers milling round the refreshment booth.

Makes Them Feel Abroad

Salts has gone to great pains to give English visitors the illusion that they are visiting a foreign country. Many of his girl attendants are dressed in the traditional Welsh costume of stove-pipe hat and flannel coat, and a mobile harpist plays Welsh airs at various points where the crowds are thickest.

When Radio Gwrych announces that a meal is ready each party troops into the Banqueting Hall to sit under a huge chandelier which has achieved local fame because it was once used in a film in which James Mason starred. Randy Turpin (next to the empty frame, he is Gwrych's greatest attraction) usually appears, signs a few autographs, and chats shyly to those nearest him.

Turpin is not the first champion to train at Gwrych. Bruce Woodcock started the fashion, but whereas the Salts-Woodcock relationship was strictly business—and on occasions stormy—Leslie Salts and Randy Turpin behave more like father and son.

A popular diversion at Gwrych is walking up and down the marble staircase built a hundred years ago by Italian workmen at a cost of £35,000. At times throughout the day Ted Lewis sings popular ballads to the accompaniment of a £1,000 grand piano at its foot.

One evening at dusk last August, Salts was making his rounds just before closing time ("I'd parked my wheelbarrow, of course,") and he noticed an elderly couple standing in the half-light on the top steps, whispering to each other. As he watched, the old man took his partner's hand and, in a stately minuet, led her slowly down the stairs. "That," says Salts, "is one little dream I should have hated to have spoilt."

"X" Marked Wrong Room

Playing the make-believe game of King of the Castle is, he finds, a favourite pastime. One blushing woman approached Leslie Salts last year and asked for his help in playing a harmless piece of make-believe. Her friends, she said, had been able to afford a holiday abroad, and were now on the French Riviera. "I want to pretend that I'm staying here," she said. She showed him her postcard. He grinned when he noticed the window she had marked with her X. "I'm afraid we'll have to move you from there," he said seriously. "You're in Randy Turpin's bathroom."

Becoming a little bolder, the woman next asked Salts to add his autograph to her message. He turned her card over. "Gwrych is very nice," it read. "They've got all sorts of things here—a railway, a zoo, and everything. But the thing most people like best is a picture of a dead rabbit that isn't there." THE END

Taking a ham roll in each hand, the young woman impulsively kissed Hilary on the cheek. "I shall remember you for the rest of my life," she said

Blizzard in the Channel

by ***LAURENCE KIRK***

ILLUSTRATED BY FANCETT

You don't usually offer bed and breakfast to a girl you've just met on the boat train. At least, Mr. Deane didn't. But this was a special occasion

THE FOUR TRAINS started at different hours on the Friday from various sunny places. The one from the Riviera was all sleeping cars while that from Interlaken had none. The Rome express was mainly sleepers, too, while the special from Genoa was only third and second class.

Hilary Deane was in the train that started from Rome and he had a second-class sleeper. Now that his short £25 holiday was over, he still didn't know what had induced him to embark on it, except perhaps to escape from that ogre, Mrs. Plunder, who ruled his London flat.

Whatever the reason, he didn't regret it—although he was returning home in a more bronchial condition than when he had started.

He had learned many years ago that, while travel was three parts hell while you were actually doing it, it was both exciting in anticipation and charming in retrospect. So he settled down in his compartment and gave himself up to enjoying Rome in retrospect as he waited for the tinkle of the lunch bell.

It really was a charming city. Even Mussolini had been unable to spoil it with his grandiose ideas. But of course there had been snags. The eking out of a £25 allowance was like living on the edge of a very active volcano. He had felt he was facing ruin all the time, walking miles to avoid taking a taxi and denying himself cups of coffee and half bottles of wine when he most wanted them.

However, that was all over. He still had two thousand-lire notes left as well as some ghastly torn scraps of paper that represented fifties and hundreds, and his meals on the train were all paid for as far as Calais. He had never felt so rich in his life, and determined to celebrate with a half bottle of wine for his lunch. That not only used up most of the torn scraps of paper, but made him feel that he had enjoyed every moment of his holiday, and he spent the afternoon looking at the pleasant Italian countryside. The almond blossom was out and the apricot and peach blossom. There were olive trees

IF I WERE STALIN'S WAR CHIEF

by Captain B. H. LIDDELL HART

As Churchill and Eisenhower met in New York to discuss the defence of the free world, JOHN BULL asked the famous military writer, Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, to undertake the most important and difficult task of our time: to see the world through the eyes of Stalin's military advisers and show where and how they would move if Stalin decides on war.

Liddell Hart has brilliantly accomplished this task. In a striking article, he has put himself into the position of the Chief of the Russian General Staff and analysed the possibilities open to Russia's leaders.

For them, he says, the risks of a major war can be faced only if they can find the solution to two problems. These problems and how they might be solved are the theme of this masterly article by Britain's foremost military writer. It will appear . . .

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

Captain Liddell Hart

beside the track: cypresses in the distance: stately avenues of umbrella pines and glimpses of a serene blue sea on the left. Yes, it was a lovely country. He had been right to come.

There were still enough scraps of paper for another half bottle of wine at dinner, and when he came back the clean sheets were waiting invitingly on his bunk. After breakfast next morning, he exchanged his two thousand lire for a thousand French francs.

Then, punctually at nine o'clock, they were in Paris, and Hilary began thinking of the white cliffs of Dover and his comfortable flat in Burton Court.

At twelve o'clock they were still in Paris and at twelve five the conductor informed him quite casually that they weren't going on to Calais. There was a blizzard in the Channel and there wouldn't be any boat that day. He had the luggage unloaded on to the platform and took no further interest in the fate of his passengers.

Hilary's thousand francs, which had seemed a fortune a moment before, now dwindled into nothing.

He sat disconsolately on his luggage for a minute, wondering what he had better do. Most of the people who had francs were already rushing off to hotels. The rest ran to and fro distractedly like hens crossing a road, and the gilded representatives of the travel agencies had discreetly disappeared.

Then he noticed that there was a rich-looking train with steam up at the platform opposite, and he went across and asked where it was going. He was informed that it was the Flèche d'Or and that it was going to Calais. But why, in heaven's name, Hilary began —then he restrained himself. Could he travel on that train with his sleeping car ticket? he asked instead. No, said the conductor firmly, he could not.

Hilary had never been a man of action; in emergency, however, he could think as quickly as the next man. This was an emergency. He went back across the platform, fetched his two bags, and dumped them firmly at the entrance to the carriage where everybody would fall over them. His example was shortly followed by other distracted passengers, and after a half-hour cold war with several officials, success was in sight. Two second-class coaches were added to the immaculate Flèche d'Or; they all found seats; no supplement would be charged; and everything was gas and gaiters again.

Hilary was feeling rich again the moment the train started, and decided that he could have a half bottle of wine as well as coffee with his lunch. Then, out of the window, snow began to appear on the ground, the leafless trees were all being blown in one direction, and the few human beings about outside were either huddled behind doorways or bent double as they fought their way against the wind.

When they finally stopped at Calais Maritime, Hilary hopefully opened the window ready to hand down his luggage; but the French porter who was there on the platform just shook his head at him and kept his hands in his pockets.

There was another full train alongside on the left: beyond that some cranes, and then a ship berthed alongside. No one was allowed out on the platform, and when Hilary shouted questions out of the window no one deigned to reply. Rumour then began to fly up and down the corridors of the train. There wasn't a boat. There wasn't a hotel in Calais. They'd all have to go back to Paris. And they'd have to pay for their journey again both ways.

A little later, yet another train steamed into the station a few tracks away. This was the special from Genoa, full of Italian workers with their wives and numerous bambinos. Hilary didn't know that, at that moment; but the immediate effect was that it drew off the warders from their train and Hilary was able to slip down the platform in the slush and icy wind to try and find out for himself what was happening.

He eventually discovered a half-frozen travel agent sheltering behind a broken door. He gleaned quite a lot of information from him and came triumphantly back to the carriage.

"It may seem hard to believe," he said, "but we are really the lucky ones."

"Oh!" said several people.

"There's a whole trainload from Paris who have been out in the Channel for eight hours trying to get into Dover harbour."

"Oh, dear! It's as rough as that!"

"This train alongside us is from Switzerland and they have been here since ten o'clock this morning."

"Then what's going to happen to us all?"

"The captain of the steamer won't make up his mind whether or not he will take us until the last possible movement of the tide. That will be at five o'clock."

"That's very distressing," cried a little old lady. "Oh, very distressing indeed." And, a moment later, seeking a ray of hope: "Is the steamer an English one?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well, then we're all right."

Hilary wondered very much whether they were. The wind seemed to be increasing and snow was falling again. The railway authorities chose this moment to unload the contents of the Swiss train into theirs regardless of the fact that there wasn't room for them, and the corridors became a jumble of skis, rucksacks and zip-fastened young men and women with bright red faces.

Until a quarter past five, Hilary bore it, then he made another attempt to find the travel agent. Failing in that, he found a door marked BUFFET and went in. Inside, on a counter, was a large round metal container which presumably held coffee. There was no one to serve him, but a little farther along the counter there were two French sandwiches, rolls split in half and filled with ham. That was the only food visible, and a fresh-faced young woman in trousers, ski boots and a green jacket was staring at them avidly. He was just about to shout for someone to come and give him a cup of coffee when he noticed the fierce intensity with which the young woman was regarding the ham rolls.

"I say, you're not hungry, are you?" he asked suddenly.

"Not hungry!" repeated the young woman, and her voice seemed to come out at the top of her head.

"You've spent all your francs?"

"On a cup of soup at eight o'clock last night."

"Well, I've still got a few. May I, please?"

"I wouldn't think of it," the young woman began, then she changed her mind. "Oh yes, I would. I'm much too hungry to be proud. D'you know, I believe I was going to steal one of them!"

Hilary found the waitress and bought the two ham rolls for four hundred francs. That left him with just three hundred francs for the porter and he decided not to have a cup of coffee.

The young woman meanwhile took a roll in each hand and then impulsively gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"It's almost like the loaves and fishes," she said. "There are three other starving girls in my carriage. However, half a roll will get me to Liverpool and I shall remember you for the rest of my life."

Hilary watched her run to the door and then fought his way against the blizzard back to his carriage. A moment later, chaos began. The French authorities now elected to release the contents of all the trains simultaneously through one bottleneck of a door into the Customs shed, and the place became a seething mass of skis, skiers, luggage, porters, old ladies, Italian workers, and innumerable bambinos. A strong smell of garlic was added to all the other delights.

When he eventually got on board, Hilary was nearly frozen. All the seats were already occupied, and hundreds more people were struggling on board. There followed twenty confused, miserable minutes until he had found his porter and relinquished his last three hundred francs.

Hilary knew what his next two steps were to be. First the bar for a treble or quadruple whisky; and then some corner where he could be sick with such privacy and comfort as that operation allows. Hilary, at length, came to the latter, lay down on a couch and shut his eyes.

Presently there were unmistakable signs that the ship was in motion. There were thumps, creaks, splashes, thuds outside, and a baby began to cry in the women's place opposite. They were pitching vigorously by now. Hilary opened his eyes and shut them again. We pay money for this, he thought. There were three babies crying now and the ship rose, stalled, hovered and fell.

Hilary kept his eyes so tightly shut that he must have slept for a bit. When he opened them again there was less motion and he knew he wasn't going to be sick after all. He began to think of other things.

With any luck they ought to get to London by midnight. London! Burton Court! And bed! But then he remembered that the starving girl skier was going on to Liverpool. How could she go on to Liverpool in the middle of the night? With only half a ham roll to sustain her? Of course, Mrs. Plunder would be furious if there was another breakfast to cook in the morning. She would think it highly improper, too, if she found a young woman in the flat. Well, let her, Hilary thought. Damn Mrs. Plunder and all her works!

The steward came in and said they would be alongside in ten minutes.

Hilary went and stood by his luggage, hoping to catch sight of the girl from Switzerland so that he could offer her a bed. Instead he found himself gazing at an Italian woman leaning wearily against the woodwork opposite. She looked absolutely worn out and she had a little girl in a Red Riding Hood cape who stood quite still in front of her, pressing her face into her mother's coat. Hilary was wondering whether he had ever had childish misery more forcibly etched on his mind. But then suddenly the Italian woman gave him an appealing, despairing look, said "*Scusi*," pressed the girl firmly against him in the same attitude, and rushed hurriedly down below.

Fortunately the child was too exhausted to realize what was happening. She pressed herself as fixedly against him as she had against her mother, and the latter soon came back and took the child again. Hilary felt that he knew now what it was like to be a D.P.

There was no sign of the girl from Switzerland in the queue getting off the boat, and he couldn't see her in the Customs, either. He was one of the first to be cleared and he hurried along to the train, placed his hat on a seat to keep it, and then came back to intercept her.

At last he saw her coming along, and he went up and spoke to her.

"I say. Excuse me. But did you say you were going to Liverpool?"

"Yes."

"But how are you going to do it in the middle of the night?"

"Railway waiting room, I suppose."

"But that's nonsense! I've got a flat quite near Victoria with two empty spare rooms. Will you do me a favour and take one of them?"

The young woman looked at him and looked away, and Hilary, being rather old-fashioned, mistook her meaning.

"I've got a housekeeper," he lied. "It will be quite proper and all that."

She then looked at him straightly. "D'you really mean this?"

"But certainly I do."

"Very well. I'll look out for you at Victoria. And apart from giving a starving woman a ham roll I think it's the kindest thing I've ever heard done."

Hilary went to his carriage wishing that he had managed to do it without lying about his housekeeper. It would be very awkward when he had to explain that Mrs. Plunder didn't arrive till eight thirty in the morning.

There was another surprise for him when he got back to his carriage. Sitting bolt upright beside his hat in the saloon carriage was another small girl, much younger than the Red Riding Hood one; and this time there didn't seem to be a mother at all.

Hilary was beginning to feel rather lightheaded after all the things that had been happening to him. Oh well, he thought quite placidly, I suppose I'll have to adopt it if the mother doesn't show up. But then finally the mother did appear, an attractive, competent, brown-eyed woman, and after a long delay the train started on the last lap of the snowy journey to London.

Hilary already knew the name of the child because she had a baggage label round her neck with "Serafina Rosselli" on it. He realized that the mother would want to be beside the child, so he changed places with her, taking the one opposite with his back to the engine. He then shut his eyes wearily, thinking of Burton Court and bed.

When he opened them again, Serafina was gazing at him fixedly while her mother was anxiously examining the contents of her note-case. A little later, Mrs. Rosselli leaned forward towards him.

"You have been so kind to give me your seat," she said. "Could you tell me, please, is there a hotel near Victoria Station?"

Hilary hadn't been able to see how

"Of course there isn't anyone else, Jim. What would I be doing here if there was?"

much there was in her note-case, and he hesitated. "Yes, I believe there are quite a few."

"And the English hotels—they ask the money in advance?"

"No, I don't think they'd do that. Not if you've got luggage, at least."

Hilary felt wearily that he had been a Good Samaritan quite often enough for one terrible day, but he could not prevent himself adding: "Could you pay in advance?"

"No," she answered quite simply. "I couldn't. Not until I got in touch with my husband."

"Then your husband is already over here?"

"Yes, he's a miner working near Durham."

"And are you going to join him?"

"I hope so, but when I do not know. First there is a house for us, and then there is no house, and then I get tired of waiting. So I get a permit for Serafina and me to come and work in England—and here we are in all this snow!"

"Yes, here we are," Hilary managed to smile. Then a brilliant idea struck him. "Please listen carefully," he went on. "I have quite a comfortable flat with two spare rooms and it isn't very far from Victoria. A young lady from Switzerland is going to occupy one of the rooms tonight, but the other is available for you and Serafina. I shall be very glad to have you both."

"It is too kind, *signor*! I couldn't. . . ."

Hilary felt his weariness getting the better of him again, but he made one last despairing effort.

"In the hotels," he said firmly, "they always—*always*—ask for the money in advance."

That silenced Mrs. Rosselli's objections and Hilary sat back with his eyes shut, highly pleased with himself.

BRITISH RAILWAYS now excelled themselves and produced tea and biscuits—a very creditable performance at twelve fifteen in the morning—and twenty minutes later the train slid gently in to a snowy Victoria. Hilary got a porter and put Serafina and Mrs. Rosselli in his charge while he went to collect the young woman from Switzerland, whose name was Miss Robertson. When he came back, the porter was well up in the queue for taxis. Soon the skis and the even stranger Rosselli luggage were being loaded on board; then they were driving cautiously along the snowy, slushy streets, and finally he was opening the door of his flat with his latchkey.

Inside on the hall table was a note. He felt that there was something wrong when he picked it up and sure enough there was. It was from Mrs. Plunder.

"Gone to look after my sister," it said curtly. "There's milk in the fridge."

In his exhausted state Hilary felt that this was the last straw, the bottom falling out of a crumbling world, and he sat down heavily in the nearest chair.

"Oh dear," he groaned, "I'm afraid there isn't going to be any breakfast."

He saw the two women look at him searchingly and then glance at each other. Then Mrs. Rosselli knelt down in front of him.

"But of course there will be breakfast," she said. "I have a dozen eggs in my bag, and coffee, and bread, and a kilo of good Italian butter. I'm a good cook, *signor*. What more breakfast could anyone want?"

WHAT happened after that, he was not quite sure: the room was swimming round him too rapidly. The next time things became clear, Serafina and Mrs. Rosselli had disappeared and Miss Robertson was coming forward with a smile on her face, which he liked, and a thermometer in her hand, which he didn't like so much.

"Oh dear," he murmured. "I hope the child isn't ill."

"Serafina is as right as rain," Miss Robertson informed him. "This thermometer is for you."

"But I. . . ."

"In the mouth, please, and under the tongue."

Hilary couldn't go on talking with the thermometer in his mouth, but he gazed at Miss Robertson suspiciously when she took it out and examined it.

"I say, you're not a nurse, are you?" he asked.

"No, not a nurse," she answered with the same faint smile. "On the other hand, I am a fully qualified doctor. I specialize in the diseases of the chest and lungs. A good thing, really! Because it's pneumonia that you're going to have."

Hilary opened his mouth to speak and then passed out altogether.

As he lay convalescing only ten days later, Hilary began to wonder whether any man had ever done so much for himself by the simple process of showing a little kindness to others. Not only had he brought home a much-needed doctor and a much-needed cook, but he had collected the rations as well. And as a happy side-issue, he had got rid of Mrs. Plunder, who had been the bane of his life for two years.

And it didn't end there. Miss Robertson returned to Liverpool, but wrote regularly; so regularly that Hilary began to wonder if bachelordom were the natural state for him after all. But while he remained a bachelor, he was an extremely well-looked-after one. Mrs. Rosselli, thanks to the housing shortage in Durham, remained with him to cook the most entrancing Italian dishes, and little Serafina was around to make him feel delightfully befriended and responsible. He even began to remember the boat trip in a kindly fashion. It was not, after all, so bad in retrospect. Retrospect and anticipation; these were Hilary's little luxuries. He gave himself up to thrilling anticipation.

THE END

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A HOUSEFUL OF MONKEYS

Continued from page 13

Godden could shout, his small dog had jumped to the attack, barking furiously, and had sent the monkey leaping to the back of the chair. There followed a mad chase round the sitting-room, an unholy desecration.

Screaming, the monkey leaped from chair to sofa and from sofa to bookcase. Cushions and chair-covers were disarranged and paw-marked, small tables and reading lamps were overturned, ornaments were shaken to the floor. Godden's incoherent shouting mingled with the dog's barks. He could easily have caught the rope's end which trailed behind the monkey and brought it up short. But he could not bring himself to risk again the feel of that wiry, semi-human form running up his clothes, the touch of fur against his skin. He therefore kept dodging the monkey's path and shouting vainly for his servants.

He could glimpse further damage already done by the monkey in the adjoining dining-room, where there was broken glass on the floor, overturned flower vases, spilt water and dissected flowers on the dark surface of the table.

A porcelain shepherdess tumbled from its pedestal as the monkey jumped through an open window. With chain rattling, it went bounding over the grass, while Godden, bareheaded in the sun, strode across to Beddoes's bungalow. But it was the cook who came, a burly, middle-aged Negro, stolid and impassive, in a soiled singlet and grease-marked shorts. To Godden's outburst he listened without a sign. His thick protruding lips did not move and in his bloodshot eyes was nothing but a sullen indifference.

"One of your damned monkeys!" shouted Godden, red with anger. "In my bungalow. Half wrecked the place!"

"My master go out," said the cook simply, looking at the ground. Godden, the sweat glistening and streaming down his face, nearly hit him.

Then Beddoes drove up. Before he could leave the car, Godden turned on him.

"That monkey of yours! Why can't you keep them controlled? It's been loose in my bungalow. And that filthy-looking boy of yours——"

Beddoes did not at first understand. Half out of the car he paused, his head slightly inclined, and through the slits of his eyes regarded Godden with surprise.

"For God's sake, man. . . . It's broken all my glass, made a pigsty of the place. It ought to be shot out of hand."

THEN Beddoes did understand and his eyes widened. "Got away again, has he?" he asked.

Meditatively, he removed the ignition-key from the dashboard and walked across the grass. Bending down, he pushed his small felt hat up off his forehead and closely examined a peg in the ground. He kept clicking his tongue and shaking his head as if lost in respect for the skill which had been shown.

He stood up, his face wrinkled with apologetic smiles.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Godden, I can't understand it. You wouldn't have thought he could get away like that, would you? He's always giving me trouble, that one. I'm giving him away tomorrow. He's not like the others. There's a pretty little girl," he exclaimed as one of the monkeys ran up and sprang on his shoulder. He beamed at Godden.

"You'll let me know what damage he's done, won't you? I wouldn't like you to suffer. It won't happen again."

Godden glared at him, hating his beady eyes and his perky smile and the little veins which ran across his temples. He went back to his bungalow and without any lunch returned to his office in the town. He could not stay in the bungalow which had been violated, as if by the bursting-in of the very continent itself, and where he could hear Beddoes across the road, quite unabashed, entertaining his monkeys to the midday meal. The rooms had lost their charm, the floor was strewn with broken pieces as if the idols so zealously served there had at last been thrown down.

He did not leave the office until it was nearly dark and for an hour now he had been sitting on the veranda, waiting for Beddoes to appear and switch on the floodlight. Along the road the palm trees showed like tall, plumed sentinels, black against the sky.

Beneath the moon Beddoes's bungalow was a dark shape in the centre of which the living-room light shone through the darkness and showed an empty deck-chair placed on the stoep. From inside the bungalow came the occasional sound of Beddoes shouting to his servants, while outside the trilling notes of a canary in its cage, the rattle of a chain, a quick rustle of leaves, alone stirred the silence.

Godden's eyes were fixed on the empty chair. When the floodlight was turned on, Beddoes, sitting in the chair, would be shown up perfectly. So would the monkeys when he called them. Godden would pick them off one by one. He would put his final shot through the floodlight, which had always annoyed him anyway by shining into his bedroom. And Beddoes? Well, Beddoes had better keep still, for if he went chasing after his monkeys he might get hurt. And, of course, it would be an accident. . . . The tinkle of broken glass being swept up in the rooms behind continued.

Beddoes appeared in the porch. The floodlight above his head was switched on and he stood there, grinning and surveying the garden before him. A monkey went lolloping across the grass and sprang on his shoulder. Godden leaned forward and raised the rifle. This was as good a moment as any, before Beddoes noticed him: The sights were focused on the monkey. It would be an easy shot.

Godden heart began to race with the thrill of achievement, the thrill of his last great act of defiance against the country he had come to detest, now symbolized by the squatting monkey. But his hands were steady and the butt was firm against his shoulder. The pressure on the trigger increased. Now if only Beddoes kept still. . . . But he wasn't keeping still. He was turning his stupid, grinning face towards the monkey and raising his hand to pet it. But Godden could not stop. The urge to shoot was upon him and in a moment he had fired.

At the same instant the barrel was knocked upwards and the bullet went crashing among the branches of one of the palm-trees across the road.

Godden swung round, his face suddenly dark and angry.

"What the ——?"

HIS dilated eyes fell upon the small white-clad figure of his cook who stood beside him.

"What you do no good," said the cook, "at all." He spoke with all the quiet authority which fifteen years' service might have been expected to give him, but there was a tense glitter in his eyes. Reflected gleams from the floodlight in the garden opposite played upon his black, wrinkled face, while Godden was slumped back in his chair, open-mouthed and staring. His left hand loosely held the barrel of the rifle, whose butt had slipped to the ground. Before he could speak again there was the sound of running feet on the gravel below and Beddoes appeared up the steps of the veranda, his sharp eyes darting everywhere.

"Mr. Godden! Are you all right?"

He glanced rapidly between Godden and the cook, who stood motionless.

"My master clean him gun," said the cook simply. "It make fire without him savvy."

"What's that?"

Beddoes came closer, cupping his hand round his ear.

"My master clean him gun," repeated the cook more loudly. "Tha's all."

"Cleaning his gun, eh?" Beddoes's eyes were shrewd as they turned to Godden. "You ought to be careful, Mr. Godden. Are you sure you're all right?"

Godden, white-faced and shaken, still could not speak. His lower lip hung loosely, but he looked up at Beddoes with a certain awe as at one who had been snatched from the edge of eternity.

"I had a bit of good news today," Beddoes continued at the top of his voice. He was more and more convinced that Godden had been within an ace of shooting himself. It wasn't safe to leave him. The best thing was to keep on talking.

"I'm going on leave next week. Bit of all right, eh? The boss spoke to me this afternoon. 'George,' he said, 'the Tarkwa's coming in next week. Homeward bound. You'd better get yourself a passage and come back quick so as I can get away for Christmas. Christmas,' he said, 'don't seem right out here, somehow. Especially if you've got kids.' So I'm off next week. Look," he continued, taking a step nearer, "why don't you let me put that thing down for you? That's better. Hallo, hallo! What's this? Six cartridges, eh? Taking no chances, were you? It wasn't half a fright you gave me, you know. The monks, too. They all ran up trees. I'll have to see about getting rid of them tomorrow. And that reminds me."

BEDDOES moved to the edge of the veranda and shouted across to his bungalow. "Kojo! Bring that box I tell you for Mr. Godden."

"Yes," he went on, turning back to Godden, "there's something I want to give you before I go because of what the monk did in your place this morning. They won't be equal to what you've lost, of course. But I'd like you to have them. I'd feel better if you did. Ah! Here we are."

His cook came up the steps of the veranda with a large cardboard box. Beddoes put it on the table beside Godden and carefully lifted out two massive glass decanters with long necks and stoppers the size of ducks' eggs. They might have adorned a stockbroker's sideboard round about 1880. They were in hideous contrast to the delicately cut glassware which was now fit only for the ashbin.

"Been in the family for years," said Beddoes, stepping back to give them a last admiring glance, "but I've got sick of packing 'em up and carting 'em around. If they're any use to you you're welcome. I know you like glass."

Godden stirred himself. "But I couldn't possibly—I——"

"Now, now! I insist, all because of what the monk did. They're not in full settlement, mind! I'm still expecting your valuation. This is an extra."

Godden stared at the decanters. Whatever could he do with them? Bury them, probably. He wouldn't be seen dead with such monstrosities. And what was he to do with this fellow Beddoes who still waited on his veranda, reluctant to go, apparently?

The old habit of hospitality, almost forgotten, asserted itself.

"Stay for a drink," he said. "Cook!"

"Sah!" The cook showed his teeth in a smile, sensing Godden's return to a manner which had not been evident for years.

"Get this master a chair and bring him a drink. He's off on leave and we've got to celebrate. Where's Issaka?"

"You tell him to go, sah."

"Then tell him to come back again and not be an idiot. I must apologize for disturbing you," he said to Beddoes with an air of old-world courtesy. "I was cleaning my gun. . . . Do you shoot at all? I remember at Bisley in twenty-eight. . . ."

It was quite like old times before they finished. THE END

FROM MY FAMILY ALBUM

MOST of my childhood summers were spent at Combe Martin in Devon, where my parents rented a house for the season. This somewhat high-spirited photograph was taken there. I must have been about seven years old at the time and, from all accounts, something of a handful.

Being the youngest of four brothers, I was pampered rather more than the rest. Then, when I was firmly established as the baby of the family, a sister arrived. This rather took the wind out of my sails. I felt that my position had been usurped. As a result, I tended to treat young Mary rather badly.

I used to keep grass snakes, and would delight in harrowing her young imagination with tales of people who had been killed by snake bites. Though my snakes were quite harmless, I pasted danger notices, with the word "poison" written in large letters, on their baskets. Having worked up a suitable atmosphere of terror, I would have Mary seized while I waved the snakes in front of her face.

For some strange reason which I have never fathomed, Mary was always my staunchest ally. My father, the gentlest and mildest of men, only once really lost his temper with me. I had been up to some mischief, and he sternly ordered me up to my room to punish me. Immediately Mary flared up, saying to father: "How dare you order my brother to bed? If he goes, then I shall go, too!"

And so, feeling like two little martyrs, we made a joint exit.

Though I have since acquired something of a reputation for dressing well (*The Tailor and Cutter* has rated me among the best-dressed men in the country) as a child I would cut up my clothes. If I wearied of a trouser-leg, *snip*, it would come off. If a sleeve bored me, *snip*, likewise. Hiding scissors from me was of no avail. I could always make do with gardening shears.

Then I became self-conscious about my figure. I was very plump as a boy. So, no matter how hot the weather might be, I insisted on wearing an overcoat. I never did anything purely for effect: there was always method in my madness. But my activities tended to set me apart, so I retaliated by guying the world around me. I have been doing it ever since.

Today he is a well-known comedian. For his name, see page 43

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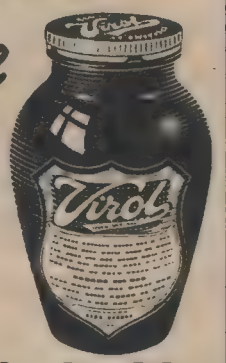

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FURTHER £50 CONTESTS ON PAGES 33 and 35

TAKE IT FROM ME

Continued from page 15

leader in charge of ground training. He examined our documents. "Your course does not begin for another fortnight," he told us. Our hearts sank—more delay. Then the squadron leader went on: "I see you've just failed the observers' course. You're just the blokes we're looking for. We haven't got a proper navigation instructor here; perhaps you would like to take on the job for the next two weeks?"

"But we *failed* the course, sir!" I said. He brushed our objection aside. "Never mind. At least you've been over the syllabus once, which is more than my chaps have." There was nothing more to be said. Thus it was that, a few short weeks after failing so dismally at Port Albert, we found ourselves instructing in navigation. It seemed incredible.

They Were Bright Boys

Our new pupils, all superior to us in rank, eyed us resentfully at first. They soon realized, however, that we were trying our best to impart our meagre knowledge to them. We found that the standard required from them was far lower than it had been for navigators. This made it easier for Frank and me.

The time came for the end-of-course exams. "You chaps must set them, of course," the squadron leader said to us. We made out a list of questions. Then, the afternoon before the exam, I entered the classroom.

"Now chaps, final refresher before the exam," I said. "I want you to pay particular attention to all the subjects I touch on during this lesson." I skipped lightly through the entire examination paper. They were bright boys. It didn't take them long to catch on.

When the results of this exam were listed, not a single man had got less than ninety per cent. Our popularity, now, was unquestioned. Even the squadron leader was quick to show his pleasure. "These figures will look marvellous at group headquarters," he chortled. "Tell me, Edwards and George, are you willing to postpone your own training, at my request, for another few weeks? I'd like you to give another course in navigation."

We could hardly refuse. Then, when we eventually came to take our own pilots' course, we instructed it ourselves in navigation. I doubt if any student, before or since, has ever had the pleasure of setting his own exam.

First Solo Flight

A pupil was allowed up to twelve hours of dual instruction at Elementary Flying Training School before he had to go solo. If he failed, he could get an extension to fifteen hours, but a further failure after that would send him back for recategorization for some other branch of aircrew. I had gone all through *that* once before. The possibility of a failure kept coming up to haunt me.

Frank George and I had no desire to find ourselves back in the Washout Squadron. Perhaps it was because of this that I tried too hard. Most of the class soloed in eight hours, but I was still not ready after nine hours, or, indeed, after ten. I was worried about it.

I found straight and level flying easy enough. I could even manage landings. It was the take-off which exposed my weakness. I would zigzag across the aerodrome, quite unable to keep the aircraft straight while on the ground.

Finally, my instructor, a flying officer named Hairs, decided that my heavy boots robbed my feet of a sensitive touch on the rudder controls. "Try gym shoes," he said. I did. My take-offs improved at once. At ten-and-a-half hours, I went up on my own for the first time.

I expect many descriptions have been written of people's sensations during their first solo. It seems that most pilots sing exultantly when they have once wrested the machine dangerously off the ground. I was no exception. My heart lifted with the aircraft, and as we reached one thousand feet and turned away from the aerodrome, I burst into song.

But, like everybody else, on the downward trip my song faded from my lips, and I began to cast nervous eyes on the piece of land on which I would now have to settle the aircraft once again—if possible, in one piece.

When I turned across wind, a great concentration could be observed on my features, and as I came into land, I have no doubt my moustache flapped with nervous tension. Hairs had left me with the words, "I'll be in the office," but I knew very well that he was standing watching his latest fledgling with almost as much tension as there was in the cockpit.

I bounced it the first time and went round again. This was also according to form. But the second time I was determined not to be the cause for panic and plonked it down more or less safely and taxied in. I never had any further difficulty with flying. As the famous saying goes, "It's a good landing if you can walk away from it!"

That night, with half a dozen of my mates who had also soloed for the first time that day, I celebrated in the wet canteen. Next morning, I had a very thick head. I hoped there would be no flying duties for me that day. Unfortunately, Hairs had heard about the celebrations. "We'll just go up and do a few steep turns this morning, Edwards," he said to me, slyly.

We went up. Fifteen minutes later I felt thoroughly ill, so ill that I had to beg him to land. He grinned as we stepped out of the aircraft. "I really should have kept you up there until you were sick," he said. "But perhaps I've taught you your lesson?"

"Yes, sir," I agreed grimly, and hurried away, making a resolution—which lasted as long as all my other resolutions—never again to fly with a hangover.

Caught In Dust Storm

Frank George was having his difficulties, too. One day, when all the available aircraft were in the air taking advantage of good weather, I was sitting in the flights doing nothing. I happened to look out of the window and was amazed to see, instead of the sunshine that had bathed the field a few moments before, a swirling storm of dust.

These dust-and-wind storms sometimes come up in the prairies in the twinkling of an eye, and on this occasion the wind must have reached fifty miles an hour or more. Those of us on the ground pulled on our helmets and goggles as protection against the wind-lashed dust, and hurried out to help our flying colleagues to come in.

One by one they touched down, still delicately airborne, even then, by the howling wind. Two of us would rush out, each grab a wing-tip and hold the machine on the ground. Finally, to our great relief, the storm abated, then subsided entirely.

An officer came in to the office. "One aircraft still not accounted for," he said.

Flight Lieutenant Hairs threw up his hands. "Don't tell me. Let me guess—it's George!" George it was.

Just A Slight Prang

I waited anxiously in the flight office, wondering if the clot had broken his neck. Minutes passed and there was no further word. Suddenly, the telephone bell rang sharply. Hairs rushed to pick up the receiver.

"Hallo! Hallo!" Then he sighed with relief. "Oh! It's you, George. Thank goodness! Are you all right? Good! What about the aircraft? Not badly damaged? That's fine. Propeller broken? That's not *too* bad. Undercarriage gone! Oh, well! Tail wheel smashed!" The flight lieutenant's voice was beginning to rise. "Back broken!" His voice had by now reached a peak which seemed to border on hysteria. "That's all, you say," he shouted. "That's *all*! It hardly seems worth while sending anybody out to pick the damn' thing up. Get back to the station as fast as you can!"

Some time later, we were posted to a station near the town of North Battleford, also in Saskatchewan. There, we moved up from Tiger Moths to the twin-engined Oxford. By this time, the bitter Canadian winter had set in. The temperature at North Battleford often dropped far below zero. We wore heavy greatcoats, balaclavas, scarves, gloves and overshoes.

Frank George and I both found ourselves being instructed by a dark-haired, round-faced flying officer named David Porter. I gathered that, before the war, he had worked as a producer in the Variety Department of the B.B.C. He was good at his job and easy to get along with.

It was an especially severe winter that year, and flying was curtailed; the days and weeks passed with very few hours in the air coming to our credit. Morale sagged. We used to sit around the big air-crew waiting-room, passing away the time. One morning, Porter came in and singled me out. "Edwards! You're going solo this morning."

"Oh!" There was a short pause. "Yes, sir!" I said.

This was totally unexpected. I wasn't sure that I was ready for a solo on twin-engined craft. I had no way of knowing that Porter, aware of falling morale, had decided on this method to raise it. I was the guinea pig. I had had only four hours of dual in Oxfords, but, to my own surprise, I performed my solo without an error. I felt good about that. Then, after only two hours of dual-flying at night, he sent me off on my own after dark. "You seem to find no difficulty in it," he remarked, when I came down. I was gaining confidence rapidly.

The time came for our end-of-course exams. I was placed tenth in the class on ground subjects, but Frank George did not do so well. For our examination in aircraft recognition, which was taken in two sections, we were lucky enough to be drawn in the second section. We pounced on an airman who had been in the first group, a young man who had the reputation of possessing a remarkable memory, and jotted down a list of the correct aircraft as he gave them to us.

It is not surprising that I scored one hundred per cent in this test, but poor Frank, as usual, put his foot in it. Starting off with the wrong aircraft, he got every one of them—although in the correct order—completely wrong.

The Wings Parade

The wings test in the air followed the ground examinations. I made no grave errors. Later I was called in for an interview with the station commander, a tall, spare group captain, who wanted to determine whether or not I was deserving of a commission. "Tell me, Edwards, what have you done in the R.A.F. up till now?"

I drew in a deep breath, and began my long and complicated narrative. Fortunately, I had a good listener. "Mmmm," he murmured after some time. "You *do* seem to have knocked about a bit. Thank you very much."

When the list was posted, twelve commissions had been granted, and I was number twelve. I feel, somehow, that the group captain took pity on me for my chequered career.

The usual end-of-course party followed the Wings Parade, in which even the youngest and least experienced drinkers joined. At the height of the evening, a call was made for the inevitable trombone solo, and I obliged with what few tunes I knew. Then, to the tune of the "Stars and Stripes," I led a mad procession out into the snow and round the camp. The last hours of this celebration were spent by me in carrying away and putting to bed those who could not hold their liquor.

Bunkhouse Acrobats

If you have ever tried to help a drunken man into the top part of a double-decked bunk, you will know how funny and exasperating it can be. I have seen, at Trenton, a completely pixilated New Zealander given a leg-up by a well-meaning friend in the same condition. Before he knew where he was, he was over the top bunk and lying on his face on the other side.

In the billets, these double-bunks were placed only a few feet apart in order to accommodate the maximum number of airmen. It was possible, if you came in at night in the right state of mind, to give the first one a mighty push and see the whole lot bumping into one another, going down like a row of ninepins. I must confess that I played this prank more than once.

After the Wings Parade, I discovered I had been posted back to Trenton to take a flying instructor's course. I did not much relish the prospect of returning to that station which held so many unhappy memories for me. I need not have worried. Nobody there remembered me and, in any case, my stay there was extremely brief.

I did not take very well to the sudden switch from the twin-engined Oxford to the single-engined Harvard, and was failed on this machine after only a couple of weeks. I could fly it all right, but I was not very good at aerobatics. "What you need," my instructor said to me, "is plenty of single-engined flying." So I was posted to Kingston, Ontario.

When I left Trenton, I said goodbye

"Good man, Bartlett—hasn't missed a day in forty years"

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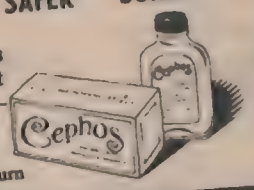

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FURTHER £50 CONTESTS ON PAGES 31 and 35

to Frank George, who had been my companion since those early days of drilling round the car park at Cambridge. He persevered with the flying instructors' course and passed it without any difficulty.

I did not meet Frank again until after the war. He took a postwar course at Cambridge and is now lecturing at Bristol University. There must have been more in that square head than we all thought.

The training school at Kingston specialized in the teaching of Fleet Air Arm pilots, and included in their curriculum was air-to-air target practice. *I* towed the target.

The towing flight was equipped with a few obsolete aircraft called Battles, most of which had been wiped out in the early fighting in France before Dunkirk. Those that remained had been shipped to Canada.

My first solo in a Battle, a long-nosed, single-engined machine with a large wingspread, was a terrifying experience. Because it was a single-seater, there was no way to give me dual instruction, and before I took off, my flight commander, F/Lt. Ellis, showed me over the controls. With his last-minute instructions buzzing through my head, I taxied out for my take-off.

Dilemma In The Air

On the ground, the Battle had a very pronounced nose-up tilt and all I could see straight ahead was the great engine and giant propeller. I opened the throttle. Instantly, the tail rose. The sudden change of view found me quite unprepared: I felt as if I was scooting along the runway with nothing at all in front of me. I pulled myself together and drew the stick towards me. This revealed my second error. I had not correctly adjusted the trim, and had to heave backwards on the stick to get into the air at all.

At one hundred feet, still shaken, I nervously removed my left hand from the throttle to feel round for the undercarriage lever. With horrible fascination I watched the throttle lever move back by itself and, as it did so, the engine slowed almost to a stop. I had forgotten to tighten the nut which held the throttle in place against the plane's vibration.

I jerked the throttle back open again, releasing a cloud of black smoke from the exhaust. Now I was in a ghastly predicament. If I took my left hand off the throttle, the engine stopped; and if I took my right hand off the stick, we went into a sickening dive. There was nothing for it but to hang on until we had gained a little height.

Eventually, with my heart beating wildly, I gripped the stick between my knees and quickly made the necessary adjustments. Even after I had landed, it took me some time to get over this nerve-shattering experience. Three pints later, I felt better.

The Target's Eye-view

I soon learned that target towing could never be my favourite sport. I would fly out over the lake, parallel to a small island. This was the towing line. Along this line, at a height of three thousand feet, I would drag a large canvas drogue. Fortunately, the drogue was at the end of a thousand feet of wire; but there were times when this did not seem long enough.

As I started each run along the line, a pupil in a Harvard trainer would start his run from the other end at about six thousand feet. Approaching, he would peel off and make a diving attack on the target at the end of my tow-line. His object was to fire in such a way that his bullets went out over the water. He was also supposed to miss the towing aircraft.

In the back of my Battle, operating a winch, was a frightened airman. I didn't blame him. He was equipped with a Very pistol and he was supposed to shoot a red flare if it appeared that the Harvard mistook the Battle for the drogue. This constant alertness tended to wear on the nerves.

Our station commander, G/Capt. Greig, had some very pleasant, easy-going ideas, of which I thoroughly approved. After five in the afternoon he allowed us to wear civilian clothes.

"Let me know if I hit a nerve"

After a while, I began to feel quite at home in Kingston and, having saved some money, I bought an ancient red Oldsmobile coupé for fifty dollars. This purchase was inspired by the fact that I was going around with the dark and pretty eighteen-year-old daughter of a squadron leader. Her name was Pat. I used to take her for drives in the car, and to dances at the club.

Enter Professor Jiminy

When I was not chasing Pat or drinking, I was helping with the inevitable station concert party. I wanted to include my act on the trombone and hit on the idea of dressing up as an old professor. A portly old doctor in the town, with whom I was fairly friendly, offered to lend me his morning suit, which was a pretty old-fashioned affair. Owing to his great size, the trousers only just stayed up, and to prevent them falling completely off, I tacked a pair of bicycle clips on the bottom. With spats and pince-nez and a battered old umbrella, I looked the perfect seedy professor—billing myself as Professor Jiminy.

This costume was so suitable that I begged the doctor to let me hang on to it. It must have been a great sacrifice for him, but he eventually let me have it for ten dollars. I used the same suit when I started at the Windmill Theatre after the war, and still have it, though I have given it up in favour of less comical attire.

My brother Alan had earned his wings by now. He had also taken a special course in navigation and was instructing at the Navigation School, Mount Hope, near Hamilton.

I turned my efforts towards trying to get posted to his unit. After a conscientious three months in the two flight, I put in a written application for a change of employment. Somewhat to my surprise, the request was granted.

Once again I had gone full circle. Here I was at navigation school again, but this time *I* was the pilot. It was *I* who turned round and demanded a course for base from the uncertain pupil-navigator. It was *I* who pointed out the towns and took the aircraft back to base when he was hopelessly lost.

Soon after my arrival at Mount Hope, I took over the duties of station entertainments officer, and Alan and I threw ourselves into the production of a camp show, which we called *RAFter Raisers*. It went down very well, and I then slaved away preparing *RAFter Raisers Mark II*. I had just completed my plans and started rehearsing when I was suddenly posted from Mount Hope.

I was so anxious to see the new show through that I decided to approach the C.O. for a postponement of my departure. As I entered his office, the group captain took the wind out of my sails. "Have you heard about your posting, Edwards?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's just what you wanted, isn't it—to get back to the U.K. and get cracking?"

What could I say to that? I realize now that he not only approved of my being sent away, but quite probably had arranged it himself. I think the combination of the Edwards brothers was a bit too much for him, as there always seemed to be some sort of trouble in the air. As editor of the station magazine I had had a skirmish or two with him, and when Alan and I bought a horse and asked for permission to ride it round the aerodrome, we were stretching things a bit far.

But I was not yet on my way to England, for I had first to go to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, for a further course in navigation, designed for flying in Coastal Command.

Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province, was completely "dry"—at least in theory and according to the law. You could, of course, buy spirits if you had a doctor's prescription, but, in addition, as always happens in a "dry" state, bootleggers had set up shop, sometimes quite openly, throughout the island. In some cases this bootleg liquor caused blindness and worse.

Remedy For Drunks

At the welcoming parade for the new course of officers the C.O. said: "You may buy a limited amount of spirits, gentlemen, in the officers' mess. You will also be offered all kinds of hooch in the town, but I advise you not to touch it. The guardroom at the main gate is equipped with a stomach pump. My station police have orders to use it on anyone who comes back from town intoxicated."

I found it a bore once again to be in the navigator's seat—although this time I managed to pass the course—and volunteered to help with the staff piloting. In this way, I was able to keep my hand in at flying. One day, we were given the news that one of our Ansons, out on an exercise, had failed to return. We all flew out over the Gulf searching for it, and eventually found it, miraculously—and precariously—force-landed on an icefloe.

The four crew, visible from the air, were standing on the ice, obviously unhurt, waving madly in a plea for rescue. This was not easy to provide, but a calm and competent civilian pilot of the Maritime Central Airlines volunteered to try to come down on the floe in a small aeroplane, something like a Tiger Moth, equipped with skis.

With a combination of skill and bravery which remained a topic of admiring comment on the station for some time, he landed on the floe not once, but four separate times, rescuing one man at each landing until the entire crew was brought back to safety. *That* was real flying.

When my course was over, I was qualified to fly in Coastal Command. I was posted to the transit camp in Moncton, New Brunswick, there to await a boat back to the U.K. But I found the transient officers' mess terribly overcrowded and I knew that my return home would be delayed.

Staged An Operetta

On my first evening in the mess at Moncton, I recognized a familiar face. It was F/O. David Porter, who had been my instructor at North Battleford. I went over to him. "Hallo there, Mr. Porter," I said, forgetting that my rank was now the same as his. Then, remembering, I trailed off in embarrassment.

Porter grinned. "Hallo, Edwards! What are you doing here? What about a drink?" He was as glad to see me as I was to see him. Over a glass of beer he told me that he had just finished writing an operetta. Would I help him to stage it? Would I help him! It was projects like this that kept one sane during the long spells of waiting.

The operetta was called *The Transient Officers' Mess*, and was a satire on all the goings-on among the officers waiting for repatriation. Now we had to have it set to music. We had noticed a young flying officer who liked to pound away for hours at a time on the piano in the anteroom. We approached him and put the opening chorus down in front of him. "Can you put this to music?" David asked.

He took a quick look at it. "How would this do?" he said, and tinkled a pleasant little tune on the keys. We agreed that it would do very well indeed. It was not long before almost the entire operetta was set to Stan Kirtley's music, although, since he played only by ear, not a note of it was written down.

Waiting For The Boat

After that, we went into rehearsal. I played a leading part—that of an officer who had been waiting so long for the boat that he had begun to go potty. I remember some of my lines:

Please post me before I die of frustration;

Please post me to any other damn' station;

Please post me for my breakdown is near;

And I've got to get to Hades or to hell out of here.

I also joined the station dance band as third trombonist. We played for many station affairs and once or twice outside the camp. The local Moncton radio station invited us to do half an hour's broadcast, and this took a great deal of rehearsing and preparation. When we finally did it, nobody was greatly impressed, the manager merely saying: "Too much talking. Not enough dance music." Thus ended my first broadcast.

Life meandered on at Moncton, and we were busily preparing for yet another show when, at long last, David Porter said to me one day: "Jimmy! Have you heard the good news? We're to proceed to Halifax and board the boat for England!" This time the rumour was true. After two years, this was finally my farewell to Canada.

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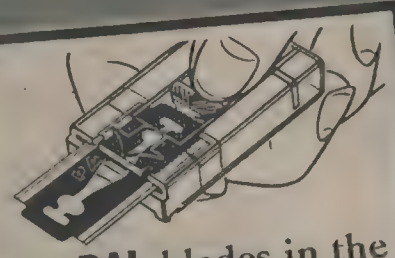

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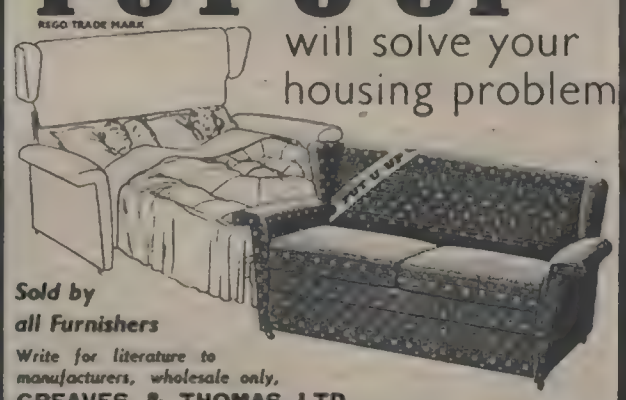

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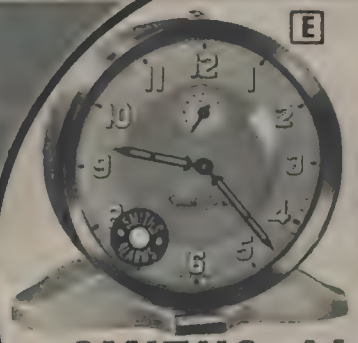
E



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Here are two photomicrographs. They show the reason why Maclean brand preparations act so effectively — and so rapidly.

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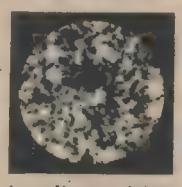

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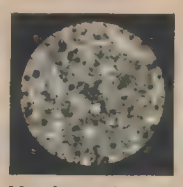

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POWDER for home use. 1/9d. 3/- & 7/-
TABLETS for use in travel or at work. 1/- 1/9d. & 3/-

GETTING THE STUFF TO THE TROOPS

Continued from page 16

off the back of the carrier and blocked the road for some hours.

Because it is necessary in peacetime to conserve manpower, there is only one complete tank transporter company now operating. New tanks being moved from the factory to ordnance depots are driven on hired transporters.

This policy of holding as few men as possible—the R.A.S.C. alone would expand to ten times its present strength in a war—forces the Director of Supplies and Transport to hire a great deal of road transport which in wartime would be replaced by service vehicles and drivers. Cost of this for the current year is estimated at £1,442,000. Yet even this large sum seems insignificant against the army's total bill for world-wide movement, which is more than £22 million.

Supplies By Parachute

The transport section of the R.A.S.C. also provides the air dispatch crews for loading supplies and, where necessary, dropping them by parachute. They must develop skill in packing and balancing a load, and a faultless sense of timing in dropping parachute bundles from the conveyors of freight aircraft. It is a job that has risks even in peacetime. Recently the members of one dispatch crew were killed when their aircraft crashed, after the parachute cords had become entangled with the tail-plane.

Water supply by air is another problem that is still the subject of experiment, and no one has yet worked out the perfect way of doing it. Various bags have been tried as water containers. The last was a sealed rubber one which was only three-quarters filled, so that it would bounce. The present method is to put the water into jerricans, crate them in fours, and drop them by parachute. Chunks of ice are dropped to the American Army.

In peacetime the railways and harbours used by our troops are operated by the normal civilian authorities. In war, the Royal Engineers of the Transportation Service have to step in and build hundreds of miles of new railway, rehabilitate damaged docks, and then operate them. They may have to create a new port out of a beachhead, as they did when they built and worked the Mulberry Harbour in the Normandy invasion.

Sometimes they have to step in where the civilians have walked out. When the Egyptians recently withdrew labour from the ports and railways in Egypt, Transportation had to move in quickly. Special supplementary reservists, who had signed an agreement to be liable for immediate call-up in just such an emergency, were telegraphed.

Rush Job For Experts

The wires went out on a Thursday morning. By that evening the first of the special reservists had arrived at the Transportation Centre, Longmoor Camp, Hampshire—from Dundee. When they were all assembled, these expert tradesmen, from lightermen to locomotive drivers, were rushed out to Egypt to provide the skilled control of the new labour force which was being recruited from Cyprus and East Africa.

The normal frustrations of railway building and operating are sometimes supplemented by the queer behaviour of allies. When the Transportation Service was operating the Persian railway during the last war, sending supplies from the Gulf to the Russians, it was suddenly hamstrung by a shortage of wagons. The Red Army had refused to send back the empties.

An officer went to investigate and found that Russian troops were using the trucks and wagons as sleeping quarters. Transportation gave their commander a smart reminder that no empty trucks meant no more supplies. The wheels soon began rolling again.

The lowering since the war of the marriage age for officers from thirty to twenty-five, and for other ranks from twenty-six to twenty-one, has meant an increased demand for married quarters.

But the object of the "Q" side is to provide. By January, 1952, half the nine thousand permanent married quarters planned for this country in a special four-year programme launched in 1949 had been built. Villages of new two-storey army houses, with two or three bedrooms according to type, have been built at Colchester and Tidworth. They look like modern housing estates, with little trace of the old-time barrack atmosphere.

At its 250 depots the Royal Army Ordnance Corps tackles the double job of keeping the present army supplied and preparing complete mobilization equipment for the army that would be called into existence at the outbreak of war.

An ordnance depot is not just a large "quartermaster's stores," where equipment can be lifted down from the shelf. It is a vast self-contained town, with its own roads and railway and tight security arrangements.

The main Central Ordnance Depot of general stores is at Didcot, in Berkshire. This is a tidy little set-up with a perimeter of more than five miles, and forty miles of railway line. Its largest shed has a surface area of 500,000 square feet—half as big again as Alexandra Palace. The Didcot range of stores comprises 55,000 items: and stores under 14,000 different item headings are issued each week.

Complaints, when they do come in, are apt to be surprising. Recently, an indignant pipe-major of a Scottish regiment wrote complaining of the quality of the band instruments being provided: "I have blown myself through three sets of bagpipes in as many months!"

Guarding The Teapots

The preservation and packing of all the equipment presents some tricky problems. One officer, after complaints of breakages, eventually designed the perfect method of shipping teapots so that their spouts and handles were not broken off. No sooner was this triumph achieved than along came the new spoutless teapots with handles that did not protrude.

In peace or war everything a soldier does from putting on his shirt to firing a gun, from flying ten thousand miles to a battlefront to opening a letter from home, is made possible only by the "Q" services.

When his appointment as Q.M.G. was first announced, some of General Roberts's friends smiled, remembering the story told of one of his demands for his men when he was a divisional commander. It was for ten thousand cases of beer. But no sooner had the delivery been made than the division received orders for an immediate move. Faced with a tricky "Q" problem, General Roberts made a quick decision.

"We can't possibly drink it all before we go," he said. "And I'm damned if we are going to leave it behind. We'll spread the load throughout the division, and carry it with us."

THE END

THE HUMAN MACHINE

Folks are queer

MOST of us seem to live in a state of permanent, if restrained, discontent. We are resigned to this being a queer world, and things rarely turning out as we wish.

The truth is, of course, that *we're* queer, not the world. We take ourselves and our complexities too much for granted. We make little effort to understand ourselves. Honest self-knowledge and courageous self-discipline demand a lot of *guts*.

by ROFFE THOMPSON

FORTUNE IS A WOMAN

Continued from page 9

married your name was Darnley, wasn't it? Sarah Darnley?"

"Yes. . . . I'm sorry—I don't remember you. What did you say your name was?"

"You never knew." I put the half-crown on the wooden bench. "You gave me this in 'thirty-nine. Or one like it. Do you remember a puncture on a lonely road?"

Her eyes were slightly less dark than her hair and lashes, intelligent and warm, but a bit secret, as if she'd learned to play it that way.

"I do remember one that happened to me; but I don't think. . . ." She hesitated. "You aren't. . . . *Heavens,* yes!"

We stared at each other for a second. Water from a tap in the corner was dripping as regularly as a metronome.

I said: "Did you ever find the bracelet?"

She must have been remembering. ". . . I can't tell you how sorry we were about that—afterwards—when it was too late. It was found—the bracelet was found near where I'd had the puncture. The thing must have dropped off when I was struggling with the wheel before you came. The clasp was always a bit unreliable."

"So are tramps," I said.

She flushed. "I'm *very* sorry. I wasn't to know—we weren't to know that you were not just an ordinary man of the road."

"But I was."

"You couldn't have been, or you wouldn't be so much changed."

I laughed at that, and stared down at the half-crown. "I think maybe it brought me luck. Perhaps now it'll do the same for you. Anyway, thanks for the loan." I turned to go, but at the door she said:

"Wait."

I stopped. She said: "I don't know your name."

"Oliver Branwell."

Her eyes went quietly over me. "I'm very sorry you were put in that position over the bracelet. I'd be glad if you'd take this back." She picked up the coin and held it out to me.

"No." I smiled briefly. "It's yours now, Mrs. Moreton. I like to pay my debts."

THE next week I went down again, to see the local builder and get the thing settled up. As before Tracey Moreton let me in. We talked business for a time, and after we'd done all we could, Moreton said in his indifferent way: "I believe you've met my wife once before."

Somehow I hadn't expected her to bother to tell him.

"Yes. She didn't remember me."

"It's not surprising, is it? Were you actually—on the road, when she met you before?"

"It wasn't just a stunt with a genteel background, if that's what you mean."

He was going to say something when he started coughing.

"Damned asthma," he said, when he could speak. "Can't shake the damned thing off. It's hereditary in a way. My mother has it sometimes, but hers is only seasonal. Come and have lunch with us sometime."

I couldn't have been more surprised. "Thank you. I'd like to."

We were at the door, and his eyes travelled incuriously over my face. "Sunday?"

"Thank you very much."

IT had been a good October, and Sunday was the best day of the month. I took my car up the drive this time, and Elliott, the butler and general handyman, opened the door. As I was looking at a small French picture in the drawing-room, Tracey Moreton came in with an older woman.

"Glad to see you, Branwell. Admiring my Watteau?" He stopped to get his breath. "May I introduce you to my mother. This is Major Branwell, Mother."

So he'd got to know that somewhere. Mrs. Moreton was tall and finely lined and rather papery; but all the same she gave you the impression of alertness and vigour.

"My son's spoken of you, Major Branwell. I believe you were in North Africa together."

I said: "Well, in the same area. . . ."

At that moment Sarah came in, and there was the usual conversation while Moreton poured out the drinks. We went in to lunch, but half-way through the meal his breathing became worse, and refusing Sarah's offer to get him something, he went out. There was a minute or two's silence.

"It's been the same all this month," Sarah said to Mrs. Moreton. "The adrenalin wears off quicker each time."

"You've another son, haven't you, Mrs. Moreton?" I asked.

She smiled at me. "Yes. The barrister. He served in the Guards, like his father before him."

Old Elliott came in and took Tracey's plate away to keep it warm.

Mrs. Moreton said: "I often think how much more fortunate I was than the women who went before me. They could only stay at home. Inactivity is the worst thing—the corroding thing. There was a Moreton at Crécy and two brothers at Blenheim. The head of the house was killed at Marston Moor."

"You've been a warlike family."

"In six hundred years? No. . . . There were long periods when whole generations were content to live in peace here. This is our place. But when war came—we did our share. . . ."

I glanced at the room. "You had so much to fight for."

"Yes," she said. "And so much to lose."

When Tracey Moreton came back in

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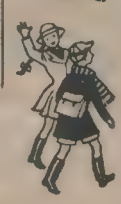

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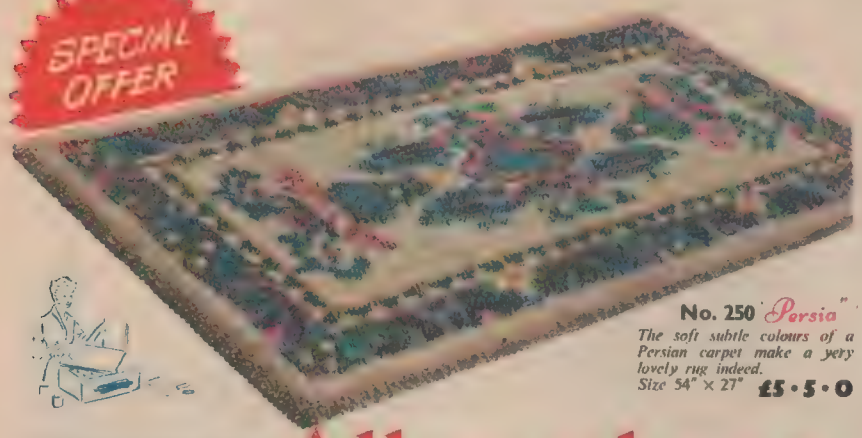

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five minutes, he seemed a lot better, and after lunch he insisted on showing me the rest of the house. Half-way up the stairs I stopped to look at another picture: it was of the three Wise Men bringing their gifts at the Nativity. He stopped rather impatiently. "There are only three or four pictures in the house worth anything. My grandfather thought nothing of that, but I've just had it restored. It's by Filippino Lippi, about 1500. The one over there on the other side is an early Constable."

Upstairs was more of a warren than down.

"It's a burden round my neck and I damn it daily. But if it came to the point I wouldn't part with it. Not even now, when I can earn nothing for its upkeep."

While we were upstairs, two visitors had come, and one of them was standing with his back to the fire drinking coffee. He was a big, handsome, rather pop-eyed man of about thirty in a grey check suit and a thick yellow silk tie. The other was a dark, quite pretty girl, with a chiffon scarf round her long, arching neck, and an attitude. Clive Fisher was the man's name, and the girl was his sister Ambrosine. She inclined her head at me without putting any strain on herself.

"Clive is the uncrowned commissar of good taste in the county of Kent," Tracey said. "Nothing ever really goes without his sanction. When my Lippi came back I knew that only his approval would make it possible for me to hang it again."

"Not merely *my* approval," said Clive, who had been listening since his name was mentioned, and appeared to take Tracey's remarks without batting an eyelid. "There are standards that *anyone* can apply. Any *reasonable* person, that is."

I listened to the discussion that went on, but didn't join in. Culture, for what it was worth, was coming to me late and piecemeal.

Sarah had gone to the side table for more coffee, and I suddenly knew that her eyes were on me. I turned and looked, but her eyes had slipped away.

All day we'd hardly spoken. Yet to speak to her was what I'd come for. Not that I'd anything special to say—except that for some reason I wanted more than anything to remove the impression I felt I'd given her, that the old grudges still rankled.

I waited, biding my time. Fisher seemed very much at home, and I gathered that he was some sort of an artist himself. If you could judge from his clothes, he did pretty well out of it.

Suddenly I had no wish to stay any longer, and I got up, almost in disgust at myself, to go. I thought Sarah would stay with the Fishers, but instead she walked with Tracey and me to the door.

I said: "Do you often come to London?"

"Monthly, to Harley Street." Tracey's breathing was getting noisy again. "But Sarah is up twice a week. She designs dresses for Delahaye."

"Perhaps you'll have a meal with me—one or both of you." I turned to Sarah and asked her: "What days are you up?"

She said: "Tracey's due to go again in about a fortnight, but really he doesn't stay very late. Why don't you come and see us here again?"

So that was that.

"Thanks," I said: "I should like it very much."

I left them standing there together at the door.

"What did he say? I'm 'a good sort,' 'a grand pal'—*that*'s what he said!"

It was the week after that when I met Vere Litchen. I didn't know then that she was to have any connections with the rest of the affair; all I knew was that there was a burglary claim at Prentiss Street, which wasn't far from the two rooms I rented in George Street; and I called in there on the way to see the owner and assess the loss.

The owner, Mr. Gerald Litchen, wasn't in, but the maid said that Mrs. Litchen would see me. She took me upstairs to a bedroom. The woman in bed said: "Do sit down, Mr.—er. . . . The room's in a *turmoil* but I know you'll excuse it. I've had a headache ever since first thing this morning."

Mrs. Litchen was a blonde of about twenty-seven with heavy eyes, a nice nose and a sulky mouth. She wore an ivory satin nightdress, to match the curtains, and mandarin-size peach-coloured fingernails.

We talked. She said Gerald was away and would be *frantic* when he knew of the loss of his Georgian silver. No, nothing else had been taken.

During this she'd been eyeing me; and when I heard the front door close I wondered if it was the maid taking her evening off. Mrs. Litchen asked me to pour her a drink and when I'd done so she nodded her shiny page-boy head in approval.

"Very nice. Do sit down. There's all the evening to kill."

Our conversation did not seem to be moving in the right direction, but I sat down with my drink. She plied me with questions and then seemed bored when I answered them. She lay with a slim, lazy arm behind her head, while a wisp of smoke from her cigarette escaped slowly upwards. In the end I got to my feet.

"Well, thank you for the drink. I have all the particulars I need now and——"

"Pour me another, will you? I can't very well get out of bed with you here."

I didn't say anything about that, but when I came back with the glass she was watching me again.

"Tell me," she said. "Are all insurance men like you?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well—thirteen stone, nice hair, cold grey eyes."

"You're overweight. And they don't."

"Not as good-looking?"

"Oh, much better-looking."

"All the same," she said, "I bet you could be fun if you really let up on that expression."

I said: "I might say the same about you."

She sipped her drink. "What are we waiting for, then?"

I went back for my own drink. "Your husband, probably."

I gave her time, but when I turned again her eyes had gone like little brown stones.

She said: "My husband's in Scotland."

"I shouldn't bank on it. You know how people get around."

There was a minute's silence. A dog was yapping monotonously in the street outside. She put her glass down carefully on the table beside her. "When you've finished your drink you can find your own way out."

I bade her good night but she didn't answer. I'd been right about the maid having gone. I found my own way out.

* * *

Delahayes is in Bond Street, and just before five on the following Friday Sarah came out and headed away from me. She walked with the quick ease of flat-heeled shoes, and she was nearly in Piccadilly before I caught her up.

"So it *is* you," I said. "I thought I recognized your walk."

She glanced up at me in surprise, and half smiled.

"I was just leaving. How are you, Mr. Branwell?"

"I was off to get some tea somewhere. I—perhaps you'd join me."

"Well, thank you. But I rather wanted to catch a train before the rush began."

"It's already started," I said. "It won't be any worse in half an hour."

She gave in, and I led her across Piccadilly to a café on the other side. She was wearing a burgundy-red coat with wide sleeves, and a little round hat of the same colour with a shiny black pin in it. It made her look older, sophisticated.

As we sat down I said: "As a matter of fact, I'd been waiting outside Delahayes for you."

"Oh?" She didn't have time to say more. The waitress came and I ordered toasted scones. Alone with Sarah like this, I was as unsure of myself as I'd ever been in my life.

"You've been at Delahayes for some time?"

"About eighteen months."

"I suppose it's a nice sort of hobby."

"Oh, it's more than that. We need what I earn. Have you any idea how much it costs to live at Lowis Manor?"

I shook my head. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry. . . ."

"There is nothing to hide. Tracey's father died in 1940, and the death duties then meant sacrificing his investments. Taxes have gone up and up ever since." She told me a lot more, but I was hardly listening; to look at her was enough.

The waitress brought the tea. I watched Sarah's hands as she poured out the tea.

"What happened to your father?" I asked. In some way that first meeting with her was a good deal more real to me than this. My mind kept going back to it.

"He sold our house and lives in London now."

"Perhaps that's what you should do."

"What, sell Lowis Manor? Would *you*?"

"Maybe," I said. "I don't know. Perhaps not."

We drank our tea. Something in our talk had helped; I don't know what it was. At least it had helped me. I had stopped sweating and feeling uncouth.

"When did you marry?" I asked, after a while.

"In 1940. Tracey was a squadron leader."

"He's a good bit older than you."

"Yes."

"And then?"

"That's all there is, really."

I took out cigarettes, passed her one, lit it. As she leaned across the table, her face was close to my hand, her eyes a dark amber in the match light.

She said: "And you?"

"Oh, I get along."

"I wish you'd tell me how it happened, this change in you."

"Is there such a change?"

"Yes. . . . Oh, yes. At least, as I remember, you were bitter then, angry in a sort of resentful way—and yet, not unlikeable, really."

"And now?"

Her lips moved suddenly, as if she hadn't quite got control of them. "I still think your bark's worse than your bite."

I said in surprise: "Have I ever barked at you?"

"No. But one has the impression you could be a great barker."

I smiled at her. "Not at you. About me . . . there's not a lot to tell. Things happened by accident. After the retreat from El Agheila I got chivvied into taking a commission. I felt badly about it for a long time—as if I'd let myself down. Then, afterwards, when it was over, Michael Abercrombie offered me this job."

"Is he nice?"

"Oh, very. He's all the things that I'm not." I met her eyes and smiled. "Cultured . . . charming . . . understandable . . . good. . . ."

"Don't you find it hard work, being none of those things?"

"No. . . . I just sit back and let it come."

There was a short silence.

"I must go, Oliver." The name seemed to slip out.

With a feeling of warmth I said: "I'll drive you down."

"No, of course not—thank you. I expect Tracey will meet me at the station."

"Do you think, if I phoned, you would have lunch with me one day? You and Tracey?"

"Thank you."

"How's Clive Fisher, the art expert?"

"All right. We don't see a lot of him. It was he who got me the job with Delahaye."

I got the bill and we went. As I held the door for her, I looked at her and I felt about her as I'd never remotely felt about any woman before. I wondered if she knew it.

If this was falling in love, then I'd done something for which my talents were very ill suited. But I knew that the choice was no longer mine.

That winter, I saw Sarah a couple more times, though not alone. In the following July I was invited down to Lowis Manor for the weekend. It was the first and only time.

I got there for dinner on Saturday and slept in one of the four bedrooms which gave on to the gallery overlooking the hall. It was a big, low room with a four-poster bed and two lattice windows looking over the lawn.

Mrs. Moreton had just come back from a holiday in the Isle of Wight, where she always spent the months of May and June. Towards the end of breakfast she said: "I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to excuse me. I promised to be down at the Bancrofts' by half-past ten. The old lady is ill and she's been asking for me."

"My mother's still living in the squirearchy age," said Tracey, when Mrs. Moreton had gone. "She still imagines herself as the lady of the manor with responsibilities towards her flock. I often wonder what the village does without her in May and June."

"It misses her very much. As everyone does," Sarah said. Then, turning to me: "You don't alter people by altering the rules, do you, Oliver?"

"Oliver doesn't know," said Tracey. "Or if he does, he'll keep it strictly

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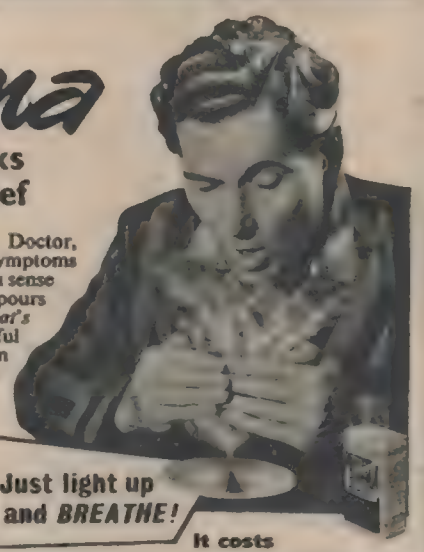

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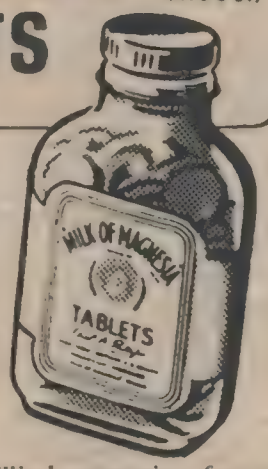

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to himself, as he keeps all his feelings to himself. I often used to wonder what a strong, silent man was like."

"Don't talk rot," I said.

Sarah laughed. "Don't talk rot," she said, mimicking me. "How typical of you, Oliver." She got up and went to the sideboard. Her spaniel Trixie, who had been watching her carefully from a corner, rose at once and shook herself and was ready to be off.

"Do you ride, Oliver?" Sarah asked.

"I've been on a horse twice. Why?"

"I thought you might like to see a bit of the countryside."

"With you and Tracey?"

"No, just me. . . . We usually get hacks from the village. They're very docile. The poor things have had all the life knocked out of them."

Carefully casual, I said: "I should like that very much."

WHEN I saw the horses they looked as high as churches, with thin stilts of legs, and I realized Sarah's idea of a hack was quite different from mine. We went out of the main gates and turned left up a narrow lane that bounded the house. After a few yards, Sarah held in her horse until I came wobbling abreast of her.

"All right?" she asked, smiling.

"More or less," I said ruefully.

We followed the lane about half a mile, and through a farmyard, which Sarah said was Lowis Farm, the last one owned by them now.

Over in the distance you could hear the church bells. It was a peaceful scene. The next hour wasn't peaceful for me at all, but it was one of the happiest I'd ever spent. At length we turned for home and she said: "D'you mind if I go on, just as far as that wood? I think Fairfly would enjoy the gallop."

I said, no, of course I didn't mind; and watched her go off across the fields, her blouse rippling and her hair streaming, and Trixie scuttling behind. My great brute, of course, wanted to follow, but after checking him twice I thought, hooray, why should I be left behind, and gave him his head.

I don't think my hair is long enough to stream, otherwise it certainly would have done. I went through all the symptoms of diving and crash-landing twenty times a minute, and the ground thundered away below like someone trying to rip a carpet from under the horse's hooves. The trees got nearer. Bits of mud and foam flicked up on to my shirt. I pulled on the reins and the brute's wicked head came up, and we made a semi-circle round Sarah and plunged into the wood.

Sarah found me among the foxgloves. "*Oliver*, are you all right?"

I tried to rub a daub of lichen off my shirt. "That damned horse had its intention in its eyes from the minute I got on."

We stared at each other intently for a moment and then we both burst out laughing. She helped me to my feet, and I didn't seem to have broken anything. We went and found my horse, who was grazing peacefully enough at the far side of the copse. Then we sat on the grass for a rest and a smoke.

She lay back against the trunk of a fallen tree, her cream silk blouse open at the neck. Her hair was ruffled, and the ride had brought a flush of colour to her cheeks.

I said suddenly, on an impulse: "Are you happy, Sarah? Have you done the things you wanted to do?"

Her eyes flickered up to my face, then she looked away again. "Yes, happy enough." She said it uncertainly, hesitantly, and I moved closer. "As for the things I wanted to do—I wanted to be a ballet dancer!" She laughed. "That's a long time ago—a world ago."

I stared at her profile. "Sometimes one wonders if there isn't a sort of frustration in some people's lives—people who seem to have so much that isn't used, that doesn't have a chance to express itself."

"Frustration. I don't know about that. I suppose by now I should be earning six pounds a week in the back row of the *corps de ballet*. Is that the sort of fulfilment you'd have prescribed?"

I got up beside her. "You'd have done better than that."

"That's all you know. Have you ever been to the ballet?"

"No. Not ever. I'd like to go with you sometime."

"It's so easy to criticize, to give advice, to sit back and talk about frustration and fulfilment and—things. But nobody's life works out to pattern. There's always wastage. We make the best, not the worst of our lives—and use what we can. . . ."

She was getting a little angry. It was surprisingly sudden, and threw me off my balance. I said: "I wasn't criticizing—or giving advice. God forbid. All I asked was, are you happy?"

"The answer is no," she said, shortly. "I suppose it's no. I don't know. Do you propose to do anything about it?"

"Is there anything I *can* do?"

She bent and picked up her crop, rather slowly straightened up, turning it round in her fingers. Then she raised her hand to push back her hair. It was a very young gesture.

She said: "That's Victor arriving now. We've people coming to lunch."

I said: "If I get tickets, will you come with me to the ballet sometime? As a friendly act?"

"Perhaps. . . . We must hurry now or I shall be late."

I MET Tracey's brother as I was coming down the stairs. He was standing half-way down, discussing with Tracey whether Barber and Curry had made a good job of restoring the Constable, and whether Clive Fisher approved the new plans for hanging it. Victor was a bigger man than Tracey, and might well have been the elder. On the surface he was an altogether more distinguished-looking man: a sleek, well-shaven face; tweeds of a newer cut, put on, one felt, for the country visit; a prosperous, good-tempered voice.

Other people were arriving at the same time, among them Clive Fisher and his sister Ambrosine. With Clive also was a tall blonde with a good figure. I looked at her again, sharply. I hadn't realized how tall she was

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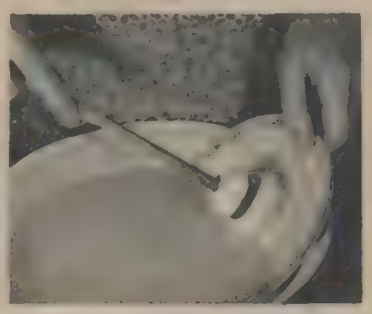

JOHN BULL *will soon begin a new feature—DOWN YOUR GARDEN. See page three of this week's Gardening Supplement for full details.*

"Was it my idea to get him a carpentry outfit? *Was* it ?"

because I'd only seen her once before, and that was in bed.

The blonde sat opposite me at lunch. We neither of us said a word about having met before.

Mrs. Moreton sat next to her younger son, and one could see that she doted on him. Clive Fisher, in his usual assertive way, dominated the conversation: but I noticed that Tracey was more lively and talkative than I had seen him before. I wondered if Tracey's wit was one of the things which had counted with Sarah when she married him. Perhaps still did count. I really hadn't an idea what they felt for each other. I only knew that she and I had moved towards a new intimacy this morning, but that my blundering had spoiled it at the start.

All winter I tried to fix up the visit to Covent Garden, but one thing and another stood in its way. I saw Sarah three or four times, but never alone, and she kept me at a distance. Once I met Tracey and had a meal with him at his club.

So it was April again—a pretty fateful spring for us all—and I saw that a season of ballet was opening next week; and I got tickets and then phoned Tracey and told him what I'd done, and would he let Sarah come and initiate me. He sounded amused and said he'd no objection; he'd call her. This was the point, and I chipped my pencil all round with teeth marks before he returned to say Sarah had her hands floured but sent a message she'd be pleased to come.

Then there was a week to wait.

I was at Covent Garden well ahead of time, watching the crowding faces carefully in case I should miss her. It had been warm all day, and heavy clouds had hung over the city.

I caught sight of her long before she saw me, and I pushed down towards her. She smiled up at me as we met, more with her eyes than with her mouth, and that meant a lot. It meant it was going to be all right.

We got to our seats as the orchestra was tuning up. The seats were at the extreme side of the lowest circle. She was wearing a scarlet frock I hadn't seen before, buttoned to the throat, made of some silk stuff, waisted, with a skirt as wide as a gipsy's.

I said: "I've been trying to fix this ever since last July. Ballet companies are capricious."

"You mean since we talked of it at Lowis?"

"Yes. . . . I was afraid Tracey might not let you come. . . . How is he?"

"Fairly well. Mrs. Moreton's away and we're having some repairs done, and that always makes him cross because they are never done the way he wants them. We may go away ourselves next week."

"Oh? Where?"

"Only to Scarborough for a bit. Tracey's brother, Victor, is there, and it will be a good thing for Tracey to be away while the dust is about. . . ."

And then the music began.

We had a meal at a restaurant afterwards and talked about ballets and the people who danced them. If there had been a certain amount of constraint in Sarah's attitude this winter, it wasn't there tonight. The ballet had excited her. She was talkative, inquisitive, asking me a dozen personal questions, laughing a lot. We got to talking about my work and to humour her I told her of a case last week when a man had tried to defraud the insurance company on the theft of some motor cars.

"Do you get many false claims?"

"Quite a few. More often in fires than in burglary because it's easier to cover up. People like to get rid of bad stock. But often the floor gives way and part of the preparations falls through into the cellar or the foundations and isn't burnt."

"Moral of that, I should think, is start your fire in the cellar."

"Yes, and the simplest props are still the best; candle in a waste-paper basket—that sort of thing."

"Why a candle in a waste-paper basket?"

"Well, you set your fire, drapes, stock, piled chairs, whatever it is, soaked in turpentine; and under it you put a candle, standing on hemp or something, inside a waste-paper basket. Then you light the candle and leave, and the fire breaks out when you're asleep in bed sixty miles away."

It was warm in the restaurant, and the hum of noise made a sort of privacy; the waiters and the diners and the vague ordinary faces were out of focus. We heard a rumble or two of thunder, but when at length we came out we were surprised to see the streets fairly streaming with water.

I started up the engine, and then a silly thing happened. I'd only had the car a month, and I didn't know the sliding roof leaked. While we were having supper a lot of rain had come through and lodged in the upturned sun-visors. As soon as I moved the car, the water spilled out in a cascade all over us.

I got out a handkerchief and a piece of clean cheesecloth and gave them to her, and apologized and laughed and fumed, while the water trickled down my neck.

I said: "I can't tell you what I feel about this. I'll drive round to my flat and pick up a mack and a rug."

"I'm all right."

"Your frock isn't. We're only five minutes away."

I manoeuvred the car out and turned it north.

By the time we reached the flat it was raining heavily again. "You'd better come in and dry yourself in front of the fire," I said. "It's a good hour's run, and you'll be frozen."

She didn't speak.

I said: "I'm terribly sorry."

"You needn't be. No one would expect such rain."

I've never been proud of my flat, but it never looked shabbier than when she went into it. The gas fire popped, and I pulled out a chair. "Sit here. I'll get the rug. It's in my room."

When I came back she was standing with her skirt held out like a fan and her hair a bit ruffled with the rain. She was looking curiously about her, in a strange element, sizing it up.

I said: "*She stood in her scarlet gown. If anyone touched her the gown*

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rustled. She stood in her scarlet gown, her face like a rose and her mouth like a flower."

Sarah had half-turned, but she didn't speak for some time.

At length she said: "I didn't know you read poetry."

"I don't much."

"Or quoted it."

"A dog's allowed two bites. After that you can shoot him."

"I wouldn't want to—for that."

I took a newish raincoat out of a cupboard. It was much too big for her.

She said: "I think we should go. Tracey may be getting anxious."

"He doesn't seem to mind your coming out with me. It isn't every husband. . . ."

"Oh, I know. We have—a perfect understanding and trust."

At the time, I wouldn't admit how those words made me feel. I lit a cigarette for her, and there was silence for a while. The gas fire was hissing like an angry audience.

She said: "I'm dry now. Let's go."

Perhaps it was the wine I'd drunk. I said: "You know I love you, don't you?"

She got up so that her face was in the shadow. "Yes. . . ."

"How long have you known?"

"Since that Sunday we went riding."

"And what of Tracey's — understanding and trust?"

She said: "I'm afraid it doesn't cover this."

She put her cigarette to her lips and drew on it. The glow lit up her face.

"Why did you come out with me, Sarah?"

"Oh, there were reasons. . . . Perhaps it's because I wanted to. I don't know. I'm very sorry I can't answer. I shouldn't have come." She laughed, under her breath, without humour. "That's obvious, isn't it?"

I helped her into the raincoat. She turned with a sort of wry smile to thank me, but instead she said: "Oh, Oliver, don't look like that. . . ."

Then the step that couldn't be taken was taken. For a second she looked up at me, not resisting the pressure of my hands on her arms; and I bent and kissed her cheek and then her mouth.

I felt her pushing me away, and at once I let her go. The shabby room grew its four walls, shadows made the same geometry on the ceiling.

I caught her at the door. "Sarah. . . ."

"Let's not say anything more now. We'd better go."

"Sarah. . . ."

She turned then—in a sort of anger

OH, JOHNNY! by TIM

that wasn't quite anger. "Don't say anything, Oliver. Not now. . . . You see, I was right, wasn't I? It just doesn't work out. I shouldn't have come."

I drove her back to Lowis. The way I felt was not surprising, I suppose. It was the first time I'd even so much as touched her, except once or twice to shake hands.

Perhaps that first meeting was partly to blame; but she'd always seemed so very far away.

The house was in darkness when we got there, except for a light in the main hall.

I stopped well back, hoping no one would hear the car, and got out to open the door for her. But as I did so Trixie began to bark, and I saw the gleam of a cigarette.

Tracey was standing in the darkened doorway.

"That you, Sarah?" he called. "Bring Oliver in for a drink. I want to talk to him."

I SUPPOSE Sarah and I had had the whole drive to recover. Anyway, Tracey seemed to notice nothing peculiar in our manner. All the same it was an ordeal, standing there in the light, blinking and drinking, pulses going faster, imagining one's face was stretched and shiny and unreal, or perhaps smeared with lipstick.

I think Tracey only wanted an excuse for getting me inside. Alone in the house except for the two old servants, he was probably glad of someone to talk to—and I had a pretty sharp twinge of conscience at the thought. Part of the hall was in dustsheets and there were builder's ladders beside the stairs. Woodworm had been found in the heavy oak balustrade running round the gallery, and they were not quite sure yet how far it had spread.

Tracey was full of a scheme for improving the lighting in the hall by putting two fresh windows in the roof, but he was doubtful whether he could afford to do the thing as he really wanted it.

Presently Sarah excused herself and went off to bed, but I stayed there until nearly two, sipping his brandy and trying to take an intelligent interest in his concerns, feeling by turns depressed and elated, and by turns a fine fellow and the cheapest of hypocrites.

When I looked back three months after, I felt I ought to have seen and understood far more, without any sudden happening to point it from outside. But there it was. I had no inkling, not the breath of an idea.

DURING this time I'd made progress in the insurance world, and at Christmas I'd become a junior partner in Abercrombie and Co. It was too early, but there was no arguing with Michael and his father.

They told me what I already knew—that more underwriters were putting their business through Abercrombies; and also the brokers—and sometimes even claimants—who had had a claim settled by me asked for me by name when another claim came along. I knew it and was glad to have made the grade. But that was what I was paid for. The rest only followed because they were the sort of generous people they were.

Michael had done his best to get me known everywhere, but I still found it quite hard to make friends. Still sometimes the old feeling of separateness cropped up, a sense of not belonging in this comfortable world. I was certainly not used to having my company sought, and I could never help feeling a bit flattered because Tracey went out of his way to make a friend of me.

A few days after my meeting with Sarah, a big film claim cropped up over the illness of one of the male stars in a new production, and I was put on to it.

There were certain rather peculiar features, one being that none of the doctors seemed quite to know what was the matter with Highbury, the film star concerned; and, as he had rather

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a reputation for taking days off in the middle of a production, I tried to check up on some of his movements shortly before his collapse. This led me directly to Bill Croft.

Croft was an American attached to the Embassy, and he had a flat in a big block in Maida Vale. He and Highbury had met in America, and had been seeing a good bit of each other during the last few weeks.

He was a pleasant enough chap, in his thirties, well dressed and quiet spoken. We sat and drank whisky, and, although he was a bit cagey to begin with, he opened up when he saw that I was not trying to trap him into any damaging admissions. He told me that Highbury had had a violent squabble with his wife, and that his wife had walked out on him—perhaps enough to justify a temperamental actor taking to his bed, but *not*, in my opinion, when many thousands of pounds depended on it.

It wasn't till I got up to go that I saw the picture.

It was at the end of the room and I'd glanced at it absent-mindedly once before, feeling there was something about it that I knew. This time I saw it was a water colour of Lowis Manor. I moved a bit nearer now, still chatting. The thing was painted very much from where Sarah and I had rested after the horse ride, except that it was lower down. The rear of the house was in the left background, and the foreground was taken up by a mill and a wood. That seemed wrong, because I knew the mill had been gone a good many years.

"Admiring my water colour?" He'd followed my eyes and broken off what he was saying.

"Yes. . . . I know the house."

"Do you? That's interesting. I'm very proud of it, because I never owned anything like a genuine Birket Foster before."

THERE was a good cube of ice left in my glass: and just for a moment I felt as if a piece of it had gone down my collar.

"A Foster? Genuine?"

Yes. I picked it up about eighteen months ago. It's called 'The Mill and Spinney,' but that's not very illuminating. Where did you say it was located?"

"I'm not certain. I may be mistaken. Is it signed?"

"Oh, surely. You can see the monogram there in the corner. I got it through a dealer in Chelsea. He put me in touch with a young woman—who had it to sell. At the time I was going to take it home with me to the States; but then I got this appointment, so I thought I'd keep it right here. I guess I'm very proud of it."

"Yes," I said. "But what——"

"Apparently she was acting for the owners, who wanted to sell it privately: they were short of cash, hit by the war, wanted to realize on it without publicity—that sort of set-up. Of course, I didn't fancy parting with fifteen hundred dollars for a fake, so I got it verified before I paid the money. I've often wondered about it, because she asked for the money in cash." He looked at me sharply. "Don't tell me the thing was stolen."

"No, no. . . . At least, not as far as I know." I swallowed something. "What was the woman like?"

"About twenty-eight or thirty. Quite a looker."

"Was she tall and dark, slight but not thin, curly dark hair with a touch of bronze, and a very clear fine skin? Eyes nearly black in some lights, but in others a sort of deep hazel?"

"That's the girl." He smiled. "So you know her well. She seemed pretty much of a lady. Don't tell me she's a crook."

I forced out some sort of an answering smile. "No. You're safe enough. The story she told you was more than half true."

To be continued next week

FROM MY FAMILY ALBUM

The photograph on page 30 is of Terry-Thomas.

LAST TRIPLE TV OFFER—PRIZES VALUE OVER £1,000!

AWARDS VALUE OVER

£850

for "Bullets" THIS WEEK!

£500 plus TV, 1st Prize

£25 plus TV, 2nd Prize

£10 plus TV, 3rd Prize

From your dealer's stock *you* choose any TV model costing up to £75—JOHN BULL pays the bill for it! (Extra cheque in lieu if preferred.)

7 of £5, 10 of £2 10s., 50 of 10s.

1,500 New "Use-as-you-choose" Awards

FINE FOWL BONUSES

A fine roasting fowl accompanies each of the 20 chief prizes won with *Bullet* which was one of four or more on single coupon or plain-paper entry sheet.

IS *your* hobby as profitable as that enjoyed by Mr. W. G. Prior (57 Windham Avenue, New Addington, Croydon), a thirty-eight year old civil servant? His hobby is *Bullets*. He began 1953 with a fortune of £500 plus television set for his neat *Bullet*, TURN OVER A NEW LEAF AND—GREET *Your* "GREAT YEAR"! New clothes, new furniture, a substantial nest-egg and grand entertainment are practical benefits four simple words brought to the reader whose photograph is here.

This week comes *your* opportunity of enjoying such blessings—in this season's final Triple TV offer. Only this week can you receive, as one of the three chief winners, a cheque-plus-TV prize for a *Bullet*. Be like Mr. Prior, make *Bullets* your hobby for 1953—and shoot off with your £500 coupon below!

HOW TO WIN THAT CASH-plus-TV

STUDY the latest winning efforts on right and you will see that to capture one of this week's Cash-plus-TV Awards, all you have to do is to add TWO, THREE or FOUR words of apt and original comment to one of the "Examples" on right.

The last six "Examples" are incomplete. If using one of them just add ONE word of your choice in the position indicated by the dotted line—then make your *Bullet* as usual.

Add 2, 3 or 4 Words to any of these "EXAMPLES"

Friend Of Britain
In Life's Arena
That Man, Stalin
Love's Sunshine
It May Hurt, But
To Help The Police
A Wizard
If Necessary
Sink Of Iniquity
Disturbing
Enormous Attraction
Perfect Baby
Now The Smiths Have TV
Humming With Activity
Granny's Remedy
In A Glass Case
Topsy-turvy
Hardly Becoming
Soft And Silky
The Butler Winced And

Incomplete "Examples" —see instructions

Strikes Us As.....
The First To .....
..... Of Her Dreams
The Doctor's .....
Mustn't Be .....
Took The .....Off

NOTE.—You may enclose *Bullets* and Xword entries in same envelope covered by single P.O. for combined entry-fee. Mark envelope "COMBINED," top left-hand corner.

POST ENTRY

"Bullets," 1,871 (or Xword 823), "John Bull," Long Acre, London, W.C.2 (Comp.)

"Bullets" Winners 1,866

FIRST PRIZE, £500 plus Television: A. T. Cross, 1 Hilltop Avenue, Whitefield, near Manchester:

No Time For Blues
Scarlet And Gold Year!

£50: A. Killer, 133 New Bolsover, near Chesterfield: LAW OF THE JUNGLE—PENETRATING OUR "ACACIA GROVES."

£25: M. B. Erskine, Davaar, Kirn, Dunoon: BRITAIN'S WAY — WE'LL CLEAR, GRASPING "NETTLES."

OTHER AWARDS: £10: A. Warren, sr., 3 Coles Lane, Sutton Coldfield: ONCE IN ROYAL—ROBES, THIS "TATTERED" PEACE. £9: A. Penhale, 16 Minterne Road, Winton, Bournemouth: BRITAIN'S WAY — JEST — BUT JUST, BEST. £8: C. S. Pette, 63 Gunnergate Lane, Marton, Middlesbrough: THE SLEEPER AWOKE AND—FOUND COMMUNISM A "BEDFELLOW"! £7: Mrs. A. S. Foulds, 1 Ashfield Cottages, Bingley: ALL WE'VE LEARNT—EXPLAINS *Sonny's* EVENING CLASSES. £6: W. Beardsley, 15 Mundy Street, Ilkeston: BRITAIN'S WAY — ISN'T "ROSES," BUT JUNE—! £5: H. High, 51 Edilom Road, Crumpsall, Manchester: LITTLE LIONEL'S HOMEWORK —ALWAYS NEATEST, THE "BLOT"! £5: F. W. Jacques, 12 Bath Terrace, Cheltenham: QUIZZED ON THE BUS—TO GROSVENOR SQUARE, NEXT?

For ten winners of £2 10s. see *"Bullets" Bulletin*. 50 *Bullets* Season Tickets and 1,500 "Good Shot" Prizes have also been posted.

RULES 1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit; the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.

2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are full rate. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests (in *Bulletin* and *Gazette*, dated February 28 and in JOHN BULL dated March 7), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, February 21, for early news of *Bullets* No. 1,871 result.)

CASH AND FOOD PRIZES FOR XWORDS!

This Way To Win

FIRST complete Square in INK, giving your Answers to Clues below. Then, if you wish to enter *one* extra Answer to any *one*, *two* or *three* Clues, give each such word in full in "Extra Answer" Form below Crossword Square.

Across Clues **XWORD 823**

2. Schoolboy who often does this when in trouble is likely to be unpopular
4. It's right against the principles of many a man to discuss
6. Small gang will probably receive new member with this
7. He's worse than useless
11. What healthy kiddy will play with
12. May be the cause of particular disorder
13. Greens are often spoilt by this
14. They're rather inclined to be gloomy
15. Long one is an asset to professional sportsman

Down Clues

1. One naturally likes the giving of this
3. When he visits racecourse, average fellow doesn't really expect to meet with crooked one
5. One belonging to railway is plainly identified accordingly
8. When the enemy attacks he's not so easy to
9. A game of football may occasionally be
10. A short one is not likely to be enough

£100 FIRST PRIZE

AWARDS VALUE £25

among 1st Runners-up and up to

50 FOOD PARCELS

EACH VALUE £2

Collection of useful extras for your larder with each Runners-up Award value 10s. or over.

Up to 500 "SIGNPOST" PRIZES —one for each 2nd Runner-up

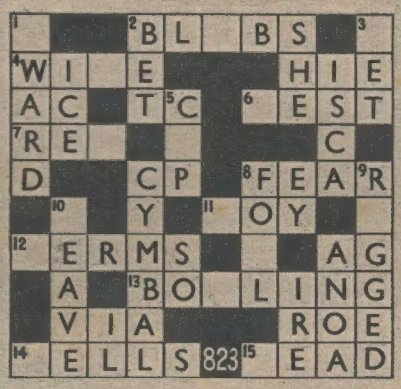
£100 WON OUTRIGHT XWORD 818

WINNING WORDS. ACROSS: 1, Pork. 2, Damp. 5, Dale. 8, Mend. 9, Beach. 12, Space. 13, Gain. DOWN: 1, Pear. 3, Wile. 4, Brush. 6, Much. 7, Left. 8, Mates. 10, Sage. 11, Pan.

£100 OUTRIGHT WINNER: E. Day, 15 Anglesey Road, Gosport, Hants.

Awards value £25 for 1st Runners-up shared by 13 entrants, each of whom receives 5-lb. Roasting Fowl in addition. Useful "Signpost" Prizes awarded to 2nd Runners-up.

£100 AND FOOD PRIZES FOR THIS XWORD



CLUE	EXTRA ANSWER	Total Fee
No.		6d.
No.		1s.
No.		2s.

(Total fee shown includes entry on Square)

Puzzle and form strictly copyright **823** Closing Postmark MON., FEB. 9

I enclose P.O. value ..... No. .....

Signed .....

Address .....

.....

In adjudication, all Extra Answers will be read in combination with each other and with all Answers in your Square. Thus your completed Square with one extra Answer to *one* Clue will represent *two* full Squares (Entry-fee 6d.). Square with one extra Answer to *two* Clues will represent *four* full Squares (Entry-fee 1s.) and Square with one extra Answer to *three* Clues will represent *eight* full Squares (Entry-fee 2s.).

Single Square with 6d. P.O. or stamps covers dispatch to you of *Crossword Gazette* dated February 21.

Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per Contest and to entry requiring not more than 4s. entry-fee. Signature indicates agreement to Rules.

MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE OFFER COMING NEXT WEEK!

EXAMPLE ..... 6d.

BULLET

EX. ..... 6d.

B. .....

EX. ..... 6d.

B. .....

EX. .....
B. ..... EXTRA TWO FOR 6d.
EX. .....
B. .....

I agree to Rules and enclose P.O. value..... No.....

Signed.....

Address.....

.....

.....

1,871 Closing Postmark MON., FEB. 9

MAY WE SEND YOU THIS GUIDE TO SUCCESS? For practical help with *Bullets* and Crosswords, stick 2½d. stamp on right—this brings you *Bulletin* and *Gazette* dated February 21. **684**

STICK 2½d. STAMP here for *"Bulletin"*

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See the difference!

Persil treats fine things so gently

EVERYONE knows that Persil washes whiter. It's a fact proved by long experience.

But some people don't know that Persil is every bit as good for fine things.

You see, Persil's millions of tiny oxygen bubbles *ease* the dirt out of fine things just as they do for whites.

That's why Persil's gentle care leaves fine things as fresh — as soft — as silky as ever!

Coloureds, woollens — everything!

The Persil secret that does such wonders with whites is simply honest-to-goodness, through-and-through cleanness. So it stands to reason that Persil works for all the wash.

Your fine things, gay coloureds and precious woollens will be safe in Persil's care.

Wash them in *lukewarm* Persil suds. Do not rub or twist; Persil's gentle, active suds will search out soiling in a minute — just by gentle squeezing.

And Persil leaves NO SCUM, even in hard water.

Whenever you need soft, cleansing suds, use Persil — it's kind to ALL your wash — and to your hands! You can *feel* it is!

PERSIL *for Fine Things!*

— Keeps them soft and silky!

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